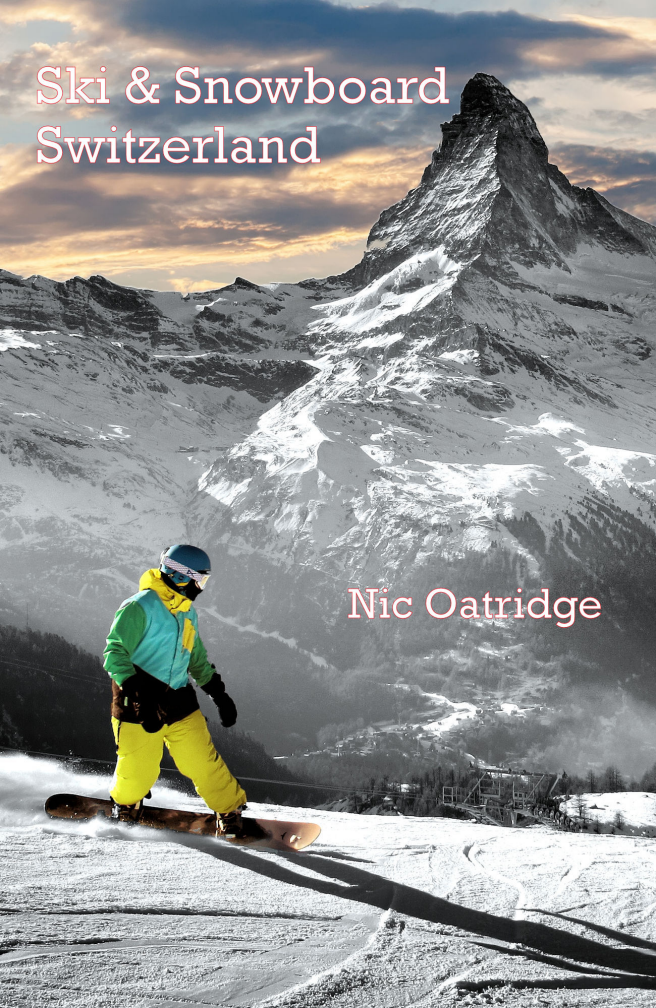
Ski & Snowboard Switzerland



Nic Oatridge

Ski and Snowboard Switzerland

By Nic Oatridge

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Introduction

This book is intended to serve various audiences:

- Independent travellers looking to make their own way to the slopes from outside Switzerland, particularly if their itinerary does not fit into the usual cycle of transfer windows or is intended to include several resorts
- Expatriates living in Switzerland, looking for suitable winter sports destinations
- Package holiday-makers who might want some deeper insight into their holiday location than the tourist brochures provide
- Winter visitors to Switzerland who want to know what else to do apart from ski or snowboard

It won't help people looking to go ski touring, but does cater for skiers and snowboarders looking for lift-served off-piste. For ski touring, if you don't read French or German, I recommend the recently updated "Alpine Ski Mountaineering

Vol 1 - Western Alps" written by Bill O'Connor and published by Cicerone Press, or get a map from swisstravelcenter.ch.

The main part of this book concentrates on the several dozen significant Swiss ski resorts, organised alphabetically. I have also included some resorts outside Switzerland, but easily reached from Switzerland – for example the Black Forest resort of Feldberg is the nearest sizable resort to Basel.

There are over 200 ski resorts in Switzerland. However around half of these have relatively short seasons unless snow conditions are particularly good, or they rely entirely on surface lifts to access the terrain. On the whole I have excluded these resorts unless they have some particularly attractive characteristic.

There are also a number of small communities that have access to good ski areas, but offer limited accommodation and have poor access to the ski area they are associated with. These too have been excluded.

The resorts I have omitted are not entirely overlooked. The penultimate section of the book summarises the lesser ski resorts I think are worth an honourable mention, organised by region. More details can be found at the companion web site, SwissWinterSports.com, which also provides more in depth and time-sensitive information about the resorts that are featured here.

I have visited all the resorts covered in this book and all the content is mine. I have tried to be fair and accurate, but welcome any corrections and insights which will help improve the quality of this publication in subsequent editions. In addition, if you are reading this some time after publication, it is likely there are some modest changes, so please do check online for up-to-date information.

Nic Oatridge
SwissWinterSports.com

Why Switzerland?

Switzerland is the home of both Alpine skiing and winter holidays. It has declined in favour amongst tourists in recent years as the Swiss Franc has appreciated against every major currency. However it still remains the destination of choice for many, and there are several reasons for this.

The most obvious of these is that Switzerland has some of the world's best ski resorts. It also has some of the highest and, as a result, a longer, more snow-sure season than most countries.

Swiss lift passes are generally good value. The Tesco bank rated both the 4 Vallées and Les Portes du Soleil amongst the cheapest resorts in the world if you looked at the extent of piste offered per dollar of lift pass. Switzerland also has some fabulous deals whereby, for example, you can ski Saas-Fee all season for less than the price of a four day ski pass if you buy it before Christmas. The Magicpass ski pass lets me ski 25 resorts all season, and, bought early in the summer, cost me less than $400.

What attracted many of the early winter tourists to Switzerland was not the skiing, but the various other diversions on offer. This still remains the case, with most Swiss resorts providing a wide range of activities, such as fine dining, scenic winter walks, tobogganing or visiting a spa.

The development of an extensive infrastructure for the winter visitor includes a transport system unlike any in the world. Literally every one of the over 200 ski resorts in

Switzerland can be reached through the integrated transport system. I usually use public transport to get to the slopes, and have only had one missed connection in over 20 years skiing in Switzerland. For visitors flying in, trains depart from the stations in both Geneva and Zurich airports, connecting you to dozens of winter sports destinations in comfort and without stress.

All the leading airlines have flights into Geneva and Zurich, but sometimes shorter transfer times or cheaper tickets can be obtained from flights into Basel, Bern or Sion. More environmentally-friendly are the train services around Europe who often provide snow trains or winter timetables that favour skiers. Trains via Geneva connect to trains for Les Portes du Soleil, Les Diablerets, Verbier and Zermatt, amongst other destinations.

Although it is often possible to get last minute accommodation for less than a week in a resort, I have often stayed in a town or village away from a resort and relied upon the ever-dependable public transport system to get me to and from the slopes. This can enable you to visit several major resorts in one trip to the Alps. Some good locations to use as a base for multiple ski destinations include Chur, Luzern, Interlaken, Montreux and Sion.

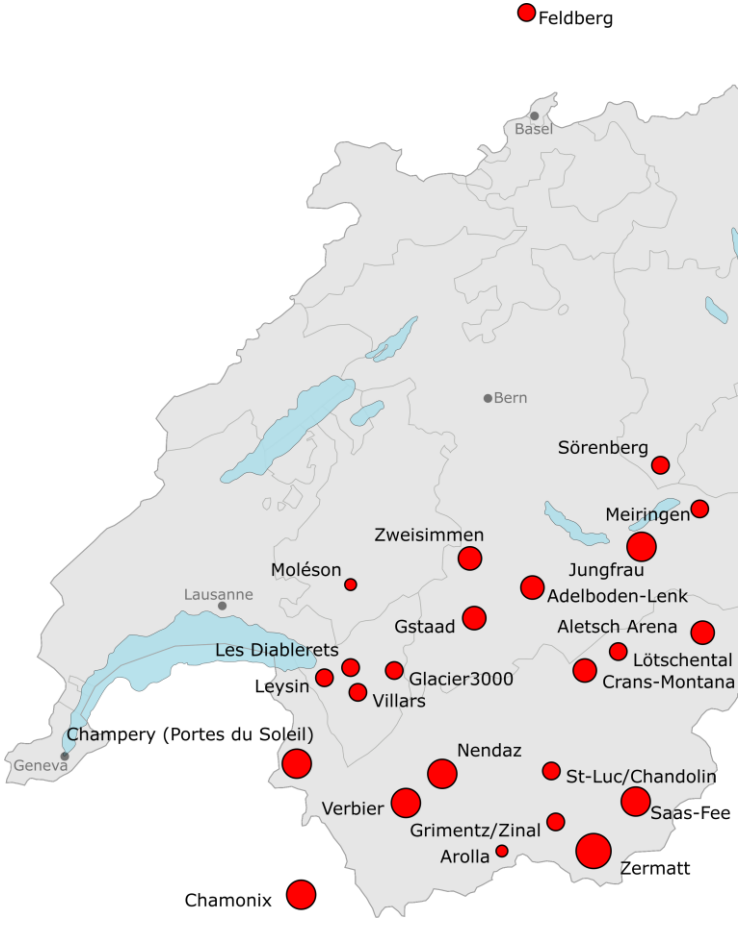
Useful to know is that Swiss Railways (sbb.ch/en) have a scheme for most major resorts that enables you to buy a combined lift and travel pass at a 20% discount. The Snow'n'Rail scheme, as it is called, is available online, at ticket offices or from ticket machines. Swiss Railways also provide a number of other ticket schemes providing unlimited travel for consecutive or occasional day use. The Swiss Transfer Ticket is a return ticket from the Swiss border, or one of Switzerland's airports, to any single destination. This ticket must be bought before you arrive. Although there are dozens of transport companies in Switzerland they all integrate seamlessly from a ticketing and timetabling perspective.

Switzerland also has a fabulous road infrastructure. The roads are kept clear but rarely treated, so winter tyres are essential. It is also advisable to carry chains. In addition you need a carnet, renewable annually, to drive on Swiss motorways.

For weather updates I find the Ski Club of Great Britain (skiclub.co.uk) pretty good and the weather model used by snow-forecast.com are extremely useful and comprehensive. Of course, the Swiss national weather site, SwissMeteo.ch is the most authoritative, particularly in terms of avalanche risk.

I'm not going to go into the ins and outs of visiting Switzerland. Most general purpose guide books will provide you this information, but I would also draw your attention to some good online resources, including MySwitzerland.com, provided by the Swiss Tourist Board, and my own SwissWinterSports.com web site.

Main Swiss ski and snowboard resorts



Size of marker indicates extent of piste
Jungfrau includes Wengen, Grindelwald and Mürren

Zurich
St Johann, Unterwasser, Wildhaus
Malbun
St Anton
Flumserberg
Ischgl
Hoch-Ybrig
Stoos
Pizol
Samnaun
Klewenalp
Braunwald
Klosters
Engelberg
Flims-Laax
Melchsee-Frutt
Brigels
Davos
Scuol
Arosa
Disentis
Obersaxen
Lenzerheide
Andermatt/Sedrun
Savognin
Airolo
Splugen
St Moritz
Pontresina

How to read the resort guides

Under the resort entries, for each featured resort, a simple graphic lets you know the maximum and minimum heights of the ski area, the total distance of all runs and the number of lifts.

Adjacent to this is a section highlighting some key characteristics of the resort. The length of the season is indicative, and depends on snow conditions and when Easter falls; if Easter is in March, many resorts where it is indicated the season runs into April will close in March. The price is typical for an adult ski pass in the 2017-8 season, but they do not vary much from season to season, although various different pricing schemes apply which can reduce the price of a lift pass. The Snow'n'Rail scheme is described above but, in essence, provides for discounted ski and transport passes.

Another cut out box gives you my personal rating of a resort from one to five stars on various criteria and what I consider the particular attractions of the resort. I have personally

visited all of them, so I hope there is some consistency in my assessment.

Indeed all of what I write is subjective. My choice of places to stay is arbitrary, but consists of places I have checked out personally, and with other sources. The number of dollar signs next to an establishment indicates price, typically each dollar sign indicates roughly a 100 Swiss Francs a night for two people price point, with five dollar signs indicating it will likely cost you more than 400 Swiss Francs a night, sometimes much more. Check online as prices may vary.

There are usually other places to stay than those I have indicated. In the case of resorts like Zermatt, many hundreds more. Sites like bookings.com will let you know a wider choice of available accommodation. There are also many specialist accommodation web sites you can use like Interhome.ch and AirBnB.

All the featured resorts have both hire shops and ski school and most have a range of additional winter sports activities. This book would be too bulky to contain all the details, but they are readily available online. For rental I recommend you check out swissrent.com.

Adelboden-Lenk

Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 64
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.adelboden.ch

Adelboden (which means the 'noble floor') is a lovely village on a terrace at the end of a valley and shares with Lenk an impressive terrain This includes a good park for boarders, the GMP (Gran Masta Park) on Hahnenmoos - indeed this is one of the best resorts in Switzerland for boarders.

In addition to the main pistes there are a number of smaller areas nearby that are covered by the lift pass.

Adelboden was the destination for Sir Henry Lunn's first winter package holiday, but it has slipped from favour for reasons which are hard to fathom, since it has a fabulous variety of good slopes and a better snow record than you might expect.

Ski/board	★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★★★
Families	★★★★★
Apres-ski	★★★

Good for:

- ✔ **Intermediates**
- ✔ **Beginners**
- ✔ **Snowboarders**
- ✔ **Families**
- ✔ **Scenery & Setting**

Although the night life is generally relaxed, there are plenty of diversions away from the slopes and this is a good destination for people who neither ski nor snowboard.

The atmosphere in the resort really kicks off in early January

when the World Cup Slalom and Giant Slalom come to the Chuenisbärgli to provide one of the toughest challenges on the whole International Ski Federation (FIS) circuit, and there is a vibrant party atmosphere throughout the week.

Best of the Slopes

The main slopes are easily accessible from Adelboden village, including the World Cup run down Chuenisbärgli. The resort has a good range of pistes for all abilities, with most of the challenging runs above Geils. There are a few long runs but some of them are flattish in places, and the best of the longer runs is probably the 5.5km, 700m drop from Lavey to Aebi. There is plenty of off-piste - I liked the sections that drop off Red route 85 down to Bergläger.

The bus ride out to the pistes at Engstligenalp is worth the round trip. A bus runs regularly on the half hour from

Adelboden bus station to Unter dem Birg at Engstligenalp in about 20 minutes and there is also ample free parking at the bottom station. With a designated free-ride area (which has its own Facebook group!) and the longest season in the area, the Engstligenalp plateau is a good place for reliable, untracked snow and ski touring. The area is never crowded, the only real drawback being you need to take the cable car back down at the end of the day.

The Elsigen-Metsch ski area is particularly convenient for the nearby town of Frutigen and provides the closest slopes for people driving into the area, with roughly 30km of pistes and a larger drop than that at Adelboden itself. The runs at Elsigenalp (2344m) and Metschalp (2142m) are accessible from the lift at Elsigbach, which also has ample free parking. A bus runs from Frutigen to Elsigbach during the winter every hour.

Tschentenalp is just above Adelboden, with long cruisy runs and extensive off-piste. There is also a relatively easy, if narrow, unpatrolled trail back into Adelboden.

Where to Eat and Party

Recommended for mountain eating is Restaurant Aebi (+41 33 673 13 56) on the Aebi-Oey piste. A good place to rendezvous is the Wunderbar on the Hahnenmoos-Geils piste. In the evening, the Berna Bar and Alte Taverne are the watering holes of choice.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airports to Adelboden are Zurich and Basel. There are some international flights to Bern Airport, with a frequent bus service to the main railway station. Trains run to Frutigen, from where buses run to Adelboden.

By Public Transport

Adelboden is about two and a half hours from Zurich and Basel. From Bern it is about an hour and a quarter. The last leg is by bus from Frutigen. The best stop to access the main downhill slopes is Adelboden, Mineralquelle, three minutes from the Oey gondola.

By Road

Adelboden is just over two hours by road from Zurich and Basel, and about an hour from Bern.

Accommodation

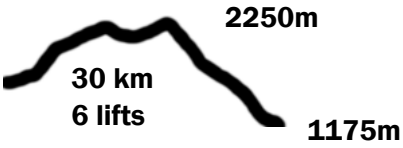
$$$$ Parkhotel Bellevue & Spa, Adelboden
+41 336738000 http://www.parkhotel-bellevue.ch

$$$ The Cambrian Hotel & Spa, Adelboden
+41 336738383 http://www.thecambrianadelboden.com/

$$$ Adler Adelboden, Adelboden
+41 336734141 http://www.adleradelboden.ch/

$$$$$ Lenkerhof Alpine Resort, Lenk
+41 337363636 http://www.lenkerhof.ch

Airolo



Language	Italian
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 45
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.airolo.ch

The most significant winter sports resort in Italian-speaking Ticino has an enjoyable and invariably uncrowded ski area at Airolo-Pesciüm.

The slopes face north above the point where the south side of the Gotthard rail and road tunnels emerge, opposite the dramatic Gotthard road pass in the high Ticino valley. Val Fontana extends west from Pesciüm with a cross-country circuit, winter walks, snowshoe trails and good ski touring.

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★
Nordic	★★
Walking	★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:

✔ **Day trips from Lugano**

✔ **Italian Speakers**

Unfortunately the slopes are a few hundred metres from the station and the courtesy bus service seems to have eschewed Swiss efficiency in favour of a more chaotic Italian approach. As a result it is usually easier to take the 15 minute walk to the valley station than suffer the frustrations of waiting for the bus only to find it is too crowded to take you, or you could have walked in the time it takes to arrive.

Even closer to the station is the small ski area Airolo-Lüina, with about 3km of piste between 1200 and 1350m. This is

where Lara Gut learned to ski and, although the season is short on this south-facing slope, it's a good place for learners.

Best of the Slopes

From the cable car top station at Pesciüm, there is a choice of using the gentle runs and inappropriately named Yukipark served by surface lifts below Comascnè, or the more challenging runs above Ravina, which are mainly served by a second cable car and a modern chairlift.

Although the runs above Ravina are rated black and red, there is not much to choose between them in terms of difficulty and a competent intermediate should feel confident attempting any of these runs. If the valley runs below Ravina are open, it is possible to ski a scenic run of almost a 1000m drop off either Sasso della Boggia or Varozzei.

There are some reasonable off-piste areas off to the right of the Comascnè T-bar or left off the top of Varozzei chairlift. Yukipark has a reasonable variety of boxes, rails and jumps and there are a few more jumps alongside the Pesciüm button lift.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich, although there are some flights into Lugano.

By Public Transport

The village has a rail station with direct connections to both Basel and Zürich - the only resort in Switzerland for which this is true - making it a convenient ski resort to get to from Northern Switzerland. From Zurich the time is just under two hours, from Basel just under three.

With a change in Bellinzona, the time from Lugano is roughly one and a half hours.

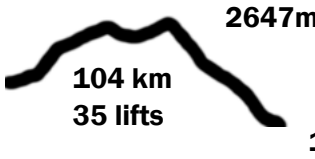
By Road

Airola is about an hour by road from Lugano.

Accommodation

$$$ Hotel Forni, Airolo
+41 918691270 http://www.forni.ch/

Aletsch Arena



Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 60
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.aletscharena.ch

Little-known outside of Switzerland, the Aletsch Arena is a total delight with a great range of skiing, a fabulous long run from the Eggishorn, child-friendly facilities, good rail links and stunning views - including the best views over the World Heritage Aletsch glacier.

Ski/board	★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Car-free resorts
- ✔ Families
- ✔ Ski-in, ski-out

In the midst of the pistes are the small, car free communities of Riederalp, Bettmeralp and Fiescheralp which lie on a high, sunny plateau above the villages of Mörel, Betten and Fiesch respectively.

To get to the ski resorts there are cable cars running from the railway stations in each of the three villages. If you are staying in the resorts, your hotel will in most cases arrange transportation for your luggage from the valley – in fact Swiss Airways and Swiss Rail both can organise carriage of your luggage from your point of departure, respectively abroad or in Switzerland.

Best of the Slopes

All the mountain resorts are linked so it is relatively easy to move across the ski area. Don't miss the amazingly scenic 12km run off the Eggishorn.

When the snow is down to the valley, it is possible to ski on and off-piste all the way down to the railway stations in the Rhône valley.

Where to Eat and Party

This is not a resort for extensive apres ski, either in the mountain resorts or the valley villages. However there are a good range of restaurants and bars scattered around the area. If you want to go out, you might find yourself visiting the same places most evenings.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

The closest destination to access the downhill slopes by public transport in this ski area is Betten, which is adjacent to the cable car into Bettmeralp. Alternatively use the cable cars in Fiesch or Morel for Fiescheralp and Riederalp respectively

From Zurich and Basel the least travel time is just over two and a half hours via Bern and Brig. From Bern it is just over an hour and a half.

By Road

From Geneva, Zurich, Basel or Bern it takes two to three hours to drive to the base stations, where you will need to park to take the cable cars up to the resorts.

Accommodation

$$$$ Hotel Waldhaus, Bettmeralp
+41 279272717 http://www.ferienhotel-waldhaus.ch/

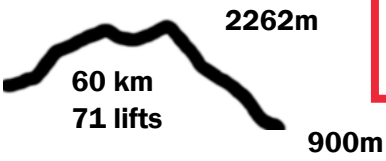
$$$$ Art Furrer Resort "Royal", Riederalp
+41 279284488 http://www.artfurrer.ch

$$$ Hotel Bettmerhof, Bettmeralp
+41 279286210 http://www.bettmerhof.ch/en/

$$$ Hotel Alpina Fiescheralp, Fiescheralp
+41 279712424 http://www.alpinafiescheralp.ch

$ Fiesch Youth Hostel
+41 279701515 http://www.youthhostel.ch/en/

Alt St Johann, Unterwasser & Wildhaus



Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 59
Snow'n'Rail	No

http://www.toggenburg.org

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:

- ✔ **Intermediates**
- ✔ **Day trips from Zurich**
- ✔ **Families**
- ✔ **Scenery & Setting**

Between the Säntis Mountain and the peaks of the Churfirsten lies the picturesque Toggenburg valley, with the family-friendly villages of Wildhaus, Unterwasser and Alt St Johann sharing a reasonably-sized ski area in the upper section of the valley

The three villages are each valley stations for the main ski area, with Unterwasser having the best infrastructure - a funicular railway and a cable car to take you right up to the peak of Chäserugg at 2262m. It really feels more like three resorts than one, with the areas above the three villages only being loosely connected to each other by pistes that are often more like trails. It works, though, and the villages at the bottom are served by a PostBus route and ski buses which are free to use if you have a lift pass.

The valley is largely North-facing and, although it is the most northerly of the main ski resorts in Switzerland the snow record is good. Wildhaus (where Zwingli, the great Swiss reformer, was born) in particular is popular with people coming for the week and has a good berggasthaus.

Although you can get around most of the resort without using surface lifts, you need to take a long T-bar up to the summit of Gamserrugg (2076m). It is worth it, though, both for the good runs but also the spectacular views across Buchs, Vaduz in Liechenstein, the Rhine Valley and the Alps stretching away in every direction except North.

Best of the Slopes

Hintere Rosswies often has good off-piste conditions. The runs off the spectacular viewpoints at Gamserrugg and Chäserugg can take you all the way down to the valley stations - a vertical drop of over 1000m with lots of variations to choose from.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

The best destination to access the downhill slopes by public transport in this ski area is Alt St Johann Post. The bus stop is five minutes from a combined gondola/chair lift. It takes about two hours from Zurich, taking the train to Vil/Wattvil and a bus from Nesslau.

By Road

It is about an hour and a quarter from Zurich to Alt St Johann.

Accommodation

$$ Hotel Schweizerhof, Alt St Johann
+41 719991121 http://www.hotelschweizerhof.ch/

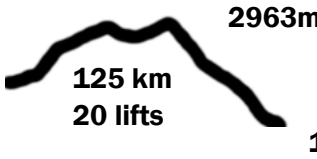
$$$$ Hotel Säntis, Unterwasser
+41 719985020 http://www.beutler-hotels.ch/

$ Säntis Lodge, Unterwasser
+41 719985020 http://www.swissbackpackers.ch

$ Berggasthaus Oberdorf, Oberdorf
+41 719991224 http://www.bergbahnenwildhaus.ch

$$$ Hotel Toggenburg, Wildhaus
+41 719985010 http://www.beutler-hotels.ch/

Andermatt



Language	Swiss German
Season	Nov-May
Adult Day Pass	CHF 37
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.skiarena.ch/

Andermatt is a pretty village with a good snow record and impressive skiing and boarding on the Gemsstock, including some fabulous off-piste runs. It is located in the canton of Uri and is generally referred to as the Skiarena Andermatt-Sedrun, Sedrun being a nearby ski resort.

Ski/board	★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Advanced/Expert
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Off-piste
- ✔ Families
- ✔ Scenery & Setting

Amongst the roll call of famous people who have visited Andermatt in the past are, apparently, Goethe, Dickens, Conan Doyle, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Elvis Presley, Queen Victoria, Ulysses S Grant and Winston Churchill, but in recent years the resort's reputation has diminished except amongst off-piste skiers.

The area is subject to a huge redevelopment and what was once a somewhat overlooked resort is likely to have its pisted area and amenities extended significantly to make it one of the largest winter sports destinations in Switzerland.

The new ski area will ultimately offer 120 kilometres of runs and will connect the village of Andermatt with Sedrun across the Oberalp pass in Graubünden.

One of the main investors in the new facilities is the Egyptian entrepreneur Samih Sawiris, who is also developing golf facilities in the resort on the site of what was once an Army barracks.

As a part of the promotion of the resort, there are numerous deals on lift passes – check with the resort web site for the best prices.

Best of the Slopes

The Gemsstock is the archetypal off-piste summit. There are so many routes down, most of which are relatively safe, and the mountain gets some fabulous dumps. It has good long runs for intermediate skiers too.

Near the station are the sunny slopes of the Natschen which hosts a range of winter activities and provides a good range of facilities for all standards of skiers, and also for non-skiers.

Where to Eat and Party

The Piccadilly or the bar at the River House are probably the best places to meet up after a hard day on the slopes.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airports are Zurich and Basel.

By Public Transport

Andermatt has a train station. It is adjacent to the chairlift at Natschen, and a ten minutes walk from the Gemsstock cable car (or you can take a courtesy bus). There is a train to and from Sedrun.

The travel time from Zurich or Lucerne is less than two hours and from Basel less than three hours, with a change at Goschenen.

By Road

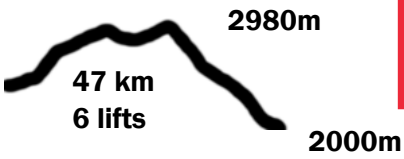
Andermatt is about an hour from Lucerne, about an hour and a half from Zurich and two hours from Basel.

Accommodation

$$$ Hotel Aurora, Andermatt
+41 418871661 http://www.aurora-andermatt.ch

$$$ The River House Boutique Hotel, Andermatt
+41 418870025 http://www.theriverhouse.ch/

Arolla



Language	French
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 40
Snow'n'Rail	No

http://www.arolla.com

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★
Nordic	★★
Walking	★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:
- ✔Ski Touring
- ✔Reliable snow
- ✔Unspoilt valley

High up along the picturesque Val D'Herens, beyond Les Haudères, lies Val d'Arolla. The skiing is perhaps somewhat overshadowed by the nearby and more accessible Quattre Vallées resorts, but the slopes of Arolla are quiet even at weekends, the snow record is very good, the resort is relatively inexpensive and it is a very popular base for ski touring, situated on the Haute Route ski tour between Chamonix and Zermatt.

The infrastructure around winter sports is relatively limited, and the entire ski area is only served by surface lifts. There is a ski school, however, and freeriding is well catered for - including heli-skiing. The village itself is pretty and has a reasonable range of amenities.

Every other April ski mountaineers compete in teams of three in the Patrouille des Glaciers, with one race leaving Arolla for Verbier and a longer one starting in Zermatt and ending in Arolla. The event is organized by the Swiss military

and attracts a few thousand highly-skilled entrants, typically almost half from the military.

There are some equally remote resorts in the Valais that are slightly easier to get to and have more extensive infrastructure that I have not included amongst my favourite resorts in Switzerland, but there is something unique about Arolla. Take the long scenic bus ride and enjoy skiing well off the beaten track.

Where to Eat and Party

The two mountain restaurants offer simple fare, but the higher of them, at 3000m, boasts stunning views and an opportunity for those taking the Haute Route to enjoy their last beer before their journey.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Geneva, but there are also some flights into Sion.

By Public Transport

From Geneva it will take the best part of four hours to get to Arolla. Change from the train at Sion and take the bus. The main lifts are five minutes walk from Arolla Post, or adjacent to the immediately preceding stop at Arolla, Magine. Although it appears that you need to change buses in Les Haudères, usually the same bus carries on to Arolla. From Sion it normally takes just over an hour to get to the slopes.

By Road

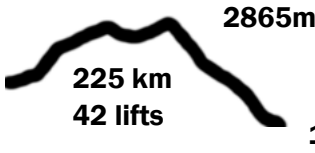
Arolla is around 200km from Geneva and the journey time takes roughly two and a half hours

Accommodation

$$ Grand Hôtel & Kurhaus,
+41 813841134 http://www.hotel-kurhaus.com/

$$ Hotel du Mont-Collon
+41 272831191 http://www.hotelmontcollon.ch

Arosa



Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 75
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.arosa.ch

Ski/board	★★★★
Snowpark	★★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★★
Families	★★★★★
Apres-ski	★★★

Good for:

- ✔Intermediates
- ✔Beginners
- ✔Non-skiers
- ✔Families
- ✔Scenic Train Journey

Arosa is a long-established resort lying at the end of one of the most spectacular rail lines in Europe. It is pretty in parts but very spread out with the most attractive traffic-free section at Inner-Arosa a bus ride away from the station and the main Obersee area. Arosa attracts a large non-skiing clientele and the slopes rarely have queues or crowds. From December 2013 neighbouring Lenzerheide has been linked by gondola with Arosa and the combined resorts create the largest linked ski area in Graubünden and one of the ten largest in Switzerland. In addition to the pistes there are an impressive 40km of marked freeride runs and it possible to ski off-piste but within the bounds of the ski area all day. As well as downhill, cross-country, tobogganing, snowshoe walks and winter walks the resort also boasts night skiing, open air skating on the lake, horse and sleigh rides, indoor swimming, full moon parties and a wide range of restaurants and bars

There is a beautiful and very easy 8 km walk from the Unterseeplatz in Arosa, about 500 metres south of the station to the Langwies station, from where you can take the train back to Arosa. The trail runs above the railway line and then along the Plessur to the old Walser village of Litzirüti. From there the route mainly passes through forest until you reach the imposing Langwieser Viaduct. Pass under the railway bridge and ascend up to Langwies station.

Best of the Slopes

There is a nice long blue run off Brüggerhorn down to Obersee. There is also some good off-piste on Brüggerhorn and the Weisshorn.

Famously the author Conan Doyle made the first ever ski tour, crossing from Davos to Arosa. There is also a great ski touring circuit taking in Tschiertschen, Arosa and Lenzerheide.

Where to Eat and Party

Brüggli bar in Inner-Arosa is a good place to start an evening out. Nearer Obersee is the Old India Bar in the Hotel Sorell.

Arosa is particularly lively during the annual Gay Ski Week in January.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

From Zurich it takes about two and a half hours to get to Arosa, changing at Chur for the fabulous one hour ascent into Arosa on the Rhätische Bahn railway line. Arosa station is adjacent to the main gondola, but there is also a courtesy bus running between base lifts and hotels.

By Road

The road distance from Zurich is around 150km and the drive takes just over two hours.

Accommodation

There is a good range of accommodation in Arosa, especially at the top end of the range. Here are some suggestions:

$$$$$ Tschuggen Grand Hotel
+41 813789999 http://www.tschuggen.ch

$$$$$ Arosa Kulm Hotel & Alpin Spa
+41 813787272 http://www.arosakulm.ch

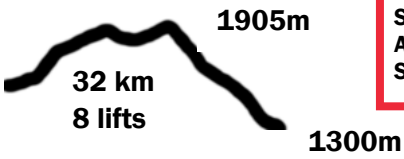
$$$$ Waldhotel National,
+41 813785555 http://www.waldhotel.ch

$$$ Hotel Streiff
+41 813787171 http://www.streiff.ch/

$$$ Arosa Vetter Hotel
+41 813787272 http://arosa-vetter-hotel.ch/

$$ Chalet Runca
+ 41 798333608 http://www.snowypockets.com

Braunwald



Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 48
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.braunwald.ch

In the seminal "Ski Runs of Switzerland" written by James Riddell in 1957, Braunwald is described as "one of the less well-known, small ski centres, and it deserves to be better known. In its modest, small way, in a very gemütlich manner, Braunwald provides everything from gentle to steep ski-ing... There is touring as well."

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★
Walking	★★
Families	★★★★
Apres-ski	★

Good for:
- ✔ **Intermediates**
- ✔ **Beginners**
- ✔ **Snowboarders**
- ✔ **Families**
- ✔ **Day trips from Zurich**

And it remains the case to this day. Car-free, family-friendly Braunwald above the Linth Valley in the Glarus Alps is one of the easiest resorts to get to from Zurich, and is ideal for a day out or a short break. The Garner Express, with trains from Ziegelbrücke and sometimes direct from Zürich, stops at Linthal Braunwald from where a funicular railway (one of the steepest in the world) takes you into the heart of the village and a couple of hundred metres ski from the bottom gondola station.

The gondola system in Braunwald is quite unique - one section has pairs of gondolas and the next has quads of gondolas that move around in a pack. Further up the mountain a couple of antique chairlifts are supplemented by a bizarre but effective system of combined gondolas and sideways-facing chairlifts.

Small and relatively low, the mostly South-facing pistes are good for beginners and intermediates but there is plenty to keep the more experienced occupied off-piste provided the snow cover is good. And despite being relatively low, snow cover is generally good, since Braunwald reputedly gets the most annual snowfall of anywhere in Switzerland.

The resort attracts a lot of snowboarders and for good reason: it is possible to get around the resort without using surface lifts, the lift pass is very competitively priced, there are virtually no flat sections, it has acres of excellent off-piste and there is a popular backpacker hostel in the village. The family hotel in the village is highly regarded too. The resort is also very popular with tobogganists, with two dedicated, 3km toboggan runs. Despite the beautiful views across Glarnerland towards the Tödi and Ortstock mountains and the extensive range of winter sports activities available so close to Zürich, Braunwald is rarely crowded, even at weekends.

Best of the Slopes

From Gumen there is an 8km run back into Braunwald with lots of off-piste variants along the route down.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

From Zurich there are often direct trains, the Glarner Sprinter, to Linthal Braunwaldbahn. The station at Linthal is

adjacent to the cable car into Braunwald. If there are no direct trains, change at Ziegelbrucke.

By Road

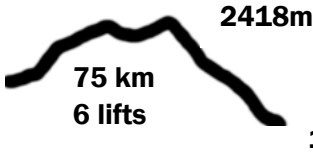
Park at Linthal for car-free Braunwald. It is about an hour and a quarter from Zurich.

Accommodation

$$$$ Märchenhotel Bellevue
+41 556537171 http://www.maerchenhotel.ch/

$ Adrenalin Backpackers Hostel
+41 793472905 http://www.swissbackpackers.ch

Brigels



Language	Romansh
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 56
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.surselva.info/

Family-friendly, sunny Brigels (Breil in Romansh, the local language) in the Surselva region consistently scores well in assessments of small resorts. The facilities are excellent, the pistes are beautifully groomed and there are plenty of long runs and off-piste areas for all standards of skier and snowboarder. Lying halfway between Flims and Andermatt, this is one resort where you will rarely wait to get on a lift or worry about crowded pistes.

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★★
Nordic	★
Walking	★★
Families	★★★★
Apres-ski	★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Snowboarders
- ✔ Families

Best of the Slopes

There are a variety of lovely runs from the top at Fil all the way down to Curtginet at Waltensburg, around a 7km distance and a 1300m drop. The resort is south-facing so the lower runs can get patchy in late season and you are best off staying above Alp Dado and the wonderfully-named Crest Falla.

Where to Eat and Party

The La Val restaurant in the spa hotel of the same name (+41 81 929 26 26) is highly regarded.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

Brigels is two and a half hours from Zurich, routed via Chur and alighting at Tavanasa-Breil/Brigels. From there a bus runs to Brigels Post. There is a courtesy bus from Brigels Post to the nearest lifts, although it is only ten minutes to walk.

. By Road

It is just over two hours by road from Zurich to Brigels.

Accommodation

$$$$ Hotel La Val
+41 819292626 http://www.laval.ch

$$$ Familienhotel Alpina
+41 819411413 http://www.alpina-brigels.ch/

Chamonix

Language	French
Season	Dec-May
Adult Day Pass	€63.50
Snow'n'Rail	No

http://www.chamonix.com

Chamonix is probably the most convenient winter sports resort to get to for a weekend break from most of Europe and the easiest day trip from Geneva. Indeed the reason it is included in a book on skiing and snowboarding Switzerland is because it is easier to get to from some parts of Switzerland than many Swiss resorts.

Chamonix is a fabulous resort, chosen for the very first Winter Olympics back in 1924, but the skiing and snowboarding are not as good as you might expect. The first issue is that most of the slopes are a bus ride away from all the hotels and the ski bus service, whilst good, is far from perfect. The second issue is that the skiing on piste is largely unexceptional and the off-piste is often quite extreme. Despite my reservations, this is one of my favourite ski destinations.

Ski/board	★★★★
Snowpark	★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★★★★

Good for:

- ✔ **Intermediates**
- ✔ **Advanced/Experts**
- ✔ **Extreme Sports**
- ✔ **Apres ski**
- ✔ **Scenery & Setting**

Best of the Slopes

The 20km Vallée Blanche, with a vertical descent of 2700m, is the best intermediate off-piste run in the entire Alps, but one where a guide is absolutely recommended and where several people lose their lives every year. It is not difficult, but the walk from the top station and the crevasses on the glacier are extremely dangerous.

Where to Eat and Party

The nightlife in Chamonix is excellent, possibly the best of all the French resorts. Throughout the town the night life rocks, but some of the best bars on a night out are strung along Avenue Michel Croz, including the Chambre Neuf, Moö and Elevation 1904. L'Amnesia at 200 Avenue de l'Aiguille du Midi is the largest and liveliest club.

There's plenty of choice for cheap eats, but Chamonix also boasts a restaurant with two Michelin Stars, the Albert Premier at 38 Route du Bouchet (+33 (4) 50530509).

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Geneva.

By Public Transport

There is a scenic train journey from Martigny, in Switzerland, which takes about one and a half hours. From Geneva Airport the most practical way to get to the resort is by shuttle bus, e.g. with mountaindropoffs.com, chamonix-valley-transfers.co.uk, chamexpress.com or alpybus.com.

By Road

It's about an hour by road from Geneva. If you book a car at the airport, make sure you get it on the French side.

Accommodation

$$$$$$ Hameau Albert 1er
+33 450530509 http://www.hameaualbert.fr

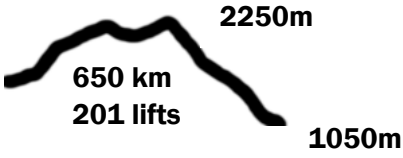
$$$$ Grand Hotel des Alpes
+33 450553780 http://www.grandhoteldesalpes.com/

$$ Les Aiglons Resort & Spa
+33 450559093 http://en.aiglons.com/

$$ Arve
+33 450530231 http://www.hotelarve-chamonix.com

$ Chamonix Mont-Blanc Youth Hostel
+33 450531452
http://www.hifrance.org/auberge-de-jeunesse/chamonix-mont-blanc.html

Champéry (Portes du Soleil)



Language	French
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 60
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.champery.ch

Below the iconic Dents du Midi, les Portes du Soleil is a huge, rambling ski area that crosses over into France and features the famous and very steep, Swiss Wall.

Ski/board	★★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★★
Nordic	★★
Walking	★★
Families	★★★★
Apres-ski	★★★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Cross-border skiing
- ✔ Non-skiers
- ✔ Scenery & Setting

Champéry, with a railway terminus in the village, is probably the most convenient of the resorts for accessing most of the circuit, and one of the more attractive, but purpose-built Les Croset, Champoussin, Morgins and Torgin have the advantage of having runs back down to the resorts, which Champéry doesn't have (although according to Walter Pause in 1963's "Salute the Skier" it once did, and there is still a run down to Grand Paradis further up the Illiez valley, a short shuttle bus ride away from the village).

On the French side, the resort of Avoriaz gives access to the best slopes (particularly for boarders), ski-in, ski-out accommodation and the liveliest nightlife in the area.

Champoussin is arguably the best of the resorts for beginners.

Despite the size of the terrain available within les Portes du Soleil, there is not the range and variety of the other large resorts in the Alps, and the highest runs are generally quite low by the standards of leading Swiss resorts. However, on a nice day with good snow the seemingly endless series of runs and off-piste sections are enough to keep even the most demanding skier or snowboarder happy.

Best of the Slopes

Le Pas de Chavanette, aka "Le Mur Suisse" (The Swiss Wall) is tough, often with huge moguls and 55 degree inclines. Stick to the sides if you want to avoid the steepest parts, but the beginning of the run is unavoidably steep. In less than a kilometre you drop over 400m, but I reckon there are some tougher marked trails elsewhere in the Alps.

There is also a pleasant 7km run down to Grand-Paradis, although it gets sticky on the lower section in late season.

Where to Eat and Party

For lunch you could do a lot worse than the Cookie Café (+41 244 791219), a wonderful gastropub at the top of the Mossettes chairlift with burgers, pizzas and great views.

In Champéry village, choose from Le Bar des Guides and Ziggy's Bar for apres-ski. There are also usually free live concerts every Friday night - check out #champerylive on Facebook.

In Champoussin a great pit stop on the slopes is Chez Gaby.

Down the valley is a wonderful spa, just outside Val-d'Illiez. It also has a good adjoining restaurant. Get off at stop Fayot on the AOMC railway. The spa (+41 244768040) offers a shuttle bus service from the stop or you can walk.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Geneva, although Sion is closer.

By Public Transport

The main train line from Geneva Airport to Brig stops at charming Aigle, from where the AOMC mountain railway trundles through Monthey to Champéry in around an hour. The total journey time from Geneva is about two and a half hours.

By Road

Champéry is about one and a half hours from Geneva. The nearest resort in the Portes du Soleil by road from Geneva is Torgon, but it is also about the least well connected of the resorts in the circuit.

Accommodation

$$$ Art.Boutique.Hotel Beau-Sejour, Champéry
+41 244795858 http://www.beausejour.ch/

$ Backpacker Le Petit Baroudeur, Champéry
+41 244791407 http://www.lebaroudeur.ch/en

$$$ Alpdze Lou Kra, Champoussin
+41244768300 http://www.alpadze-loukra.ch/

$$ Chez Gaby, Champoussin
+41 244772222 http://www.chezgaby.ch/

$$$ Mountain Lodge, Les Crosets
+41 244792580 http://www.mountain-lodge.co.uk/

$$ L'hotel Etable, Les Crosets
+41 245656555 http://hotel-etable.ch/en/

Crans-Montana

Language	French
Season	Nov-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 69
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.crans-montana.ch/

A sprawling, busy resort that covers the villages of Crans, Montana, Aminona and Les Barzettes, it was the winter home of former Bond actor, Roger Moore, until his death in 2017. And one can see why he chose to live here. There are few queues, good mountain restaurants, a large park with a halfpipe and lovely cruisy runs set against beautiful views South across the Rhône Valley. Despite its altitude, the resort needs good snow conditions because so many runs are south-facing. The resort is probably best for January through to mid-February when high, north-facing resorts can be grim.

Ski/board	★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★★★
Walking	★★★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★★★

Good for:

- ✔ **Intermediates**
- ✔ **Beginners**
- ✔ **Off-piste**
- ✔ **Sunny restaurants**
- ✔ **Scenery & Setting**

Best of the Slopes

There is a lovely 12k descent from Plaine Morte to Barzettes.

There is a surprising amount of good off-piste, around La Tza, La Toula and Chetseron with some good varied sections

from Bellalui down to Mont Lachaux and Col du Pochet to Les Violettes.

Where to Eat and Party

There are some fabulous mountain restaurants, particularly for a sunny lunchtime repast, such as Merbeé, Cabane de la Tieche and Cabane des Violettes. My personal choice would be Chetzeron (+41 274 850808), near the bottom of the Chetzeron t-bar. In the evening try the George & Dragon in Crans.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Geneva, but Sion is closer.

By Public Transport

Take a train to Sierre then take a mountain railway up to Montana Gare / CMA. Sierre station is about five minutes from the mountain railway - follow a direction marker on the pavement. At Montana Gare take a courtesy bus or walk ten minutes to the CMA base station. Although the bus passes

both Crans and Montana base stations, it isn't obvious so ask the driver to let you know.

It will take about one and a half hours from Lausanne, and two and a half hours to get to the resort from Geneva, with a direct train from Geneva Airport, going via Lausanne, going as far as Sierre (Siders in German).

By Road

The resort is just over two hours from Geneva and about 90 minutes from Lausanne. The road from the valley can get congested at times.

Accommodation

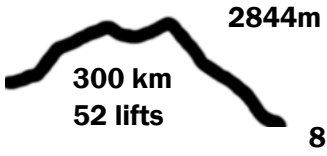
$$$$ Hotel Guarda Golf, Crans
+41 274862000 http://www.hotelguardagolf.com

$$$$$ Le Crans Hotel & Spa, Crans-Montana
+41 274866060 http://www.lecrans.com

$$$$ Hotel Bella Lui, Crans-Montana
+41 274813114 http://www.bellalui.com/

$$$ Helvetia Intergolf - Hotel & Apparthotel, Crans-Montana
+41 274858888 http://www.helvetia-intergolf.ch/

Davos



Language	Swiss German
Season	Nov-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 70
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.davos.ch

Davos has some really extensive slopes and bags of off-piste options - probably stands alongside the Engadin and the 4 Vallées as somewhere you could easily spend a whole season.

Davos Dorf has access to the fabulous snow-sure Parsenn area it shares with Klosters, but there is also good on and off-piste on other mountains served by the lifts from the town, for example the Jakobshorn from Davos Platz, and the Rinerhorn from Glaris.

Ski/board	★★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★★★★
Walking	★★★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★★★★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Advanced/Experts
- ✔ Long season

In addition you can access the small areas at Pischa and Schatzalp or, from Klosters, access the Madrisa. The Parsenn can get busy at weekends, so it is worthwhile trying out one of the smaller areas or the generally quieter slopes on Parsenn below Goschnagrat.

Jakobshorn tends to be popular with boarders and has a good park, the Jatzpark.

Davos is a busy town with lots going on, easy to get to by road or rail and a favoured destination since the mid nineteenth century when it became established as a high-altitude health resort by a German refugee, Dr Alexander Spengler, on the run from a death sentence in his home country. It became one of the very first winter sports resorts, popularised by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who came here to accompany his sick wife and got hooked on skiing. He wrote about his experiences on his return to England, fuelling an interest in the activity.

At Bolgen, Davos had the very first T-bar system in Europe. Several generations of beginners probably wish they hadn't.

Best of the Slopes

The breath-taking 14km, 2000m drop off Weissfluhjoch to Küblis is one of the longest runs in the Alps, but the unpisted trails down to Fideris and Jenaz are even longer. The Parsenn is a huge, wonderful area with quiet corners and plenty of off-piste; Jakobshorn is particularly good for boarders and beginners.

Where to Eat and Party

The Weissfluhgipfel is the classiest mountain restaurant. A popular lunchtime and apres ski venue with traditional Alpine fare is the Bolgenschanze next to the Jakobshorn base station (+41 814176560). A lot of the nightlife is spread around town, but the Hotel Europe at the bottom of the Schaltzalpbahn is a good place to hang out with several bars to choose from.

For Michelin-starred excellence, the Seehofstubli in Hotel Seehof is highly regarded (+41 814179449).

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

Davos is well served by rail with most services requiring a change at Landquart. The main stations are Davos Dorf for the Parsenn, Davos Platz for Jakobshorn and Davos Glaris for Rinerhorn. It is about two and quarter hours by train from Zurich.

By Road

Davos is about two hours from Zurich by road.

Accommodation

$$$$ Waldhotel
+41 274727600 http://www.waldhotel-davos.ch/

$$$ Grischa - DAS Hotel
+41 274727600 http://www.hotelgrischa.ch/en/

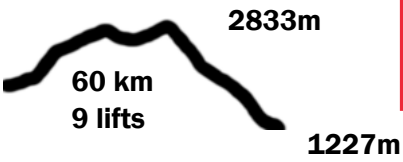
$$$ Kinderhotel Muchetta,
+41 814104100 http://www.kinderhotel.ch/

$$$ Hotel Meierhof,
+41 814168285 http://hotel-meierhof-davos.l-lotels.com/

$$ Hotel Edelweiss
+41 814161033 http://www.hotel-edelweiss-davos.ch/

$ Davos Youth Palace
+41 814101920 http://www.youthhostel.ch/en/

Disentis



Language	Romansh
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 56
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.disentis-sedrun.ch

Disentis, home to an ancient Benedictine monastery, is a largely Romansh-speaking community who call the town Mustér. The resort has a great range of slopes with some impressive verticals, highly-regarded off-piste and a reasonable beginners area. It is a good resort for mixed ability parties as the pistes do offer reasonably good progression from novice to advanced intermediate, and the trails and off-piste provide plenty of scope for expert skiers and snowboarders. To access the higher runs beneath Péz Ault and the Dadens area you do need to use surface lifts, but on the whole you can navigate the resort using the cable car and modern chairlifts.

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Off-piste
- ✔ Families
- ✔ Scenery & Setting

Disentis lies at the western terminus of Graubünden's narrow gauge Rhaetian Railway and the eastern terminus of the Matterhorn Gotthard Bahn railway. The latter links it with the ski areas at Andermatt and Sedrun and the resorts

of the Valais. The scenic Rhaetian Railway journey from Chur takes you through the Rhine gorge, past Ilanz (for buses to Laax and Obersaxen), Tavanasa (for Breil/Brigels) and along the Upper Rhine, almost to its source, 20km away above Sedrun at Lake Toma.

Best of the Slopes

The beautiful 12km run from Péz Ault down to S.Catrina has a vertical descent of 1600m, taking in red, blue and black sections and, optionally, an unprepared area. Despite the fairly steep sections on some of the red runs in the resort, the black valley run is pretty straightforward.

Val Segnas and Val d'Acletta, on the perimeters of the main pistes, provide extensive freeride areas.

Where to Eat and Party

Disentis is not a great place to visit for apres-ski. The mountain and resort restaurants are fine, but unexceptional. People tend to gather at the end of the day at Tipi Nevada.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

The trains for Disentis set out from Chur. From the station the Postbus provides a free connection to the ski area (direction Acletta), or you can turn left out of the station and walk uphill for about ten minutes. The journey from Zurich takes about two and a half hours.

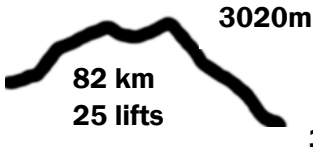
By Road

The resort is about two and a half hours by road from Zurich.

Accommodation

$ Cucagna Hostel
+41 819295555 http://www.swissbackpackers.ch

Engelberg



Language	Swiss German
Season	Oct-May
Adult Day Pass	CHF 65
Snow'n'Rail	Y

http://www.engelberg.ch/

The easiest of the great Swiss resorts to get to from Luzern by road or rail along the beautiful Engelberg valley - and home of Olympic ski champion, Dominique Gisin - the "Town of Angels" seems to be overlooked by most international visitors. The exceptions are hard-partying Scandinavians and a lot of incongruous Asian tourists who come to see the mysterious Buddha rock, or the location for the film Lagaan. Safe Switzerland often doubles up for the Kashmiri Himalayas in Bollywood movies.

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★★
Nordic	★★★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★★★★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Advanced/Expert
- ✔ Off-piste
- ✔ Day trips
- ✔ Apres-ski

The main ski and snowboard area off Titlis has some fabulous slopes and impressive off-piste, including the Laub run, and pretty much everywhere apart from the gentle blue runs at Gershnialp can be accessed without using surface lifts. On the whole the resort is not great for early intermediates or beginners, but there is plenty going on for people who don't want to hit the pistes, prefer cross-country, have

families, or who are just looking for good apres-ski. There is a cable car at Brunni which gives access to a small area of pleasant pistes, some off-piste, a couple of mountain restaurants, winter walks, a toboggan run and a few other diversions.

Engelberg enjoys a long season courtesy of the glacier at the top, but it is a limited area. It can also get busy at weekends and holiday periods, so arrive early or come mid-week when it can be blissfully quiet.

Plans to link the pistes at Engelberg with those at Melchsee-Frutt and Hasliberg were put forward a few years ago to create a linked area of 210km of piste, but they were shelved in the face of environmental opposition.

Rail buffs will regret the demise of the old cog railway, following the building of the Grafenort–Engelberg Tunnel in 2010, but it has reduced journey times from Luzern by 20 minutes.

Best of the Slopes

Reputedly Engelberg has one of the highest vertical drops in the Alps, but to do it in one run is not possible unless you take both a steep unbashed trail to Stand and then the excellent off-piste run on the Laub - to take this, turn right after Stand to the top of the Laubersgrat chairlift and carry on beyond the lift to the start of the Laub.

The area under Titlis comprises three distinct areas of pistes - the area on Titlis itself, the surface-lift and inconvenient Gerschnialp area at the half-way station on the gondola, and the wonderful runs and gentle off-piste off the Jochstock. To get to the latter area you need to take the Trübsee Hopper across a frozen lake, and from there you can also take a pisted run (with some flat sections) back down to the bottom station.

Be careful in Engelberg going off-piste; on Titlis there are some very dangerous sections if you take a wrong turn, and there are several nature reserves around which skiing is strictly verboten.

Where to Eat and Party

At the bottom of the marked trail from Klein Titlis there is a good restaurant at Skihütte Stand (+41 639 50 80), and at the end of the Laub run, the excellent Ritz restaurant (+41 637 22 12). The Yucatan, across from the station, is where most people kick-off their evening.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airports are Basel and Zurich.

By Public Transport

The station in Engelberg is ten minutes from the main Titlis base station (turn right out of the station), or take the courtesy bus for either Titlis or Brunni. You can get to the base station in less than an hour by train from Lucerne and less than two hours from Basel or Zurich.

By Road

There are charges for parking in Engelberg. The car park is barely half an hour by road from Lucerne, just over an hour from Zurich and an hour and forty minutes from Basel.

Accommodation

$$$$ Edelweiss
+41 416397878 http://www.edelweissengelberg.ch/

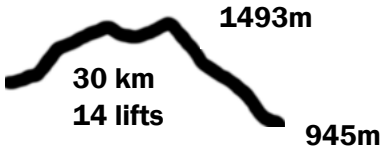
$$$ Elenwäldli
+41 416371949 http://www.eienwaeldli.ch

$$ Spannort Hotel & Restaurant
+41 416396020 http://www.spannort.ch

$$ Hotel Belle Vue
+41 416396868 http://www.bellevue-terminus.ch

$ Engelberg Youth Hostel
+41 416371292 http://www.youthhostel.ch/en/

Feldberg



Language	German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	€36
Snow'n'Rail	No

www.liftverbund-feldberg.de

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Snowboarders
- ✔ Families
- ✔ Basel day-trippers

Germany's largest winter sports resort outside the Alps, Feldberg is the highest point in the Black Forest. It is popular with weekend skiers from Basel in Switzerland so parking can be challenging and queues can also build up on the lifts - although they are rarely long. Mid-week the resort is a delight, with clear slopes and views on a clear day across the Jura as far as the Alps.

Generally this is an excellent resort for beginners and intermediates, but there is a tough FIS World Cup run too. Interestingly enough Feldberg seems to be popular with many skiers and snowboarders from Belgium, Holland and North Germany - for whom it is an easier trip than the Alps - and there is a wide range of other activities to do in the area, from spas to snowshoe walks.

There are some smaller, low-lying pistes dotted around the Southern Black Forest but the main pistes are concentrated

around the Passhöhe in Feldberg. The bottom station of the Fahl chairlift provides basic facilities, including a ticket office, restaurant and hire shop, and there are more extensive facilities available around the Hebelhof and Feldbergerhof stations, including (English-speaking) ski schools, hire shops, ticket offices and numerous restaurants at both. The hotel in

the ski area caters specifically, but not exclusively, for families.

The pistes of both areas are loosely connected by a ski bridge over the main road. The runs at Feldbergerhof are spread along a wide field with some sections nominally graded red and some blue around an impressive park. From the top you get some glorious views across the Black Forest, but it can get very chilly above the tree line. The runs at Hebelhof are more interesting, more sheltered, more challenging and more varied.

You can't entirely avoid surface lifts if you want to explore all of the resort, but it is possible to access most of it without doing so, particularly if you start your day at Feldbergerhof and end it at Hebelhof.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Basel.

By Public Transport

If you are coming from Basel, web sites may try and route you via Freiburg, but from the South it is easier, more convenient and cheaper via Zell and then on bus line 7300 alighting at Feldberg, Feldbergerhof. If you do go from Freiburg go via Titisee, alight at Feldberg-Bärental and take the Zell bus (line 7300). The stops in the resort are Fahl skilift, Hebelhof and Feldbergerhof.

Journey time from Basel is about one and three-quarter hours.

By Road

The road distance from Basel is around 75km and the journey time is just over an hour. Head for Lorrach then take the B317. Parking is free, but the car parks fill up early and it can be a long hike at weekends from where your car is parked if you don't arrive early.

Accommodation

$$$ Feldbergerhof, Feldbergerhof
+49 7676180 http://www.feldberger-hof.de/

Flims-Laax-Falera (LAAX)

Language	Swiss German
Season	Nov-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 62
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.laax.com

Ski/board	★★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★★
Nordic	★★★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★★★
Apres-ski	★★★★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Snowboarders
- ✔ Families
- ✔ Scenery & Setting

On a plateau above the Rhine, Flims and neighbouring Laax and Falera are not only of outstanding geological interest, they are Swiss snowboarders' favourite resorts. The outstanding parks around Crap Sogn Gion cater for all levels and there are loads of fabulous off-piste terrain and freeride runs. Some of the links between what is a surprisingly extensive ski area are a little flat, but work out OK if you keep your speed up! Skiers will also wonder why this resort isn't better known internationally, and, although it is popular with weekend boarders out of Zurich, you rarely have to worry about crowds here except for the village run to Flims at the end of the day.

Although the bus service between the villages is good, the last buses leave fairly early in the evening and Flims, Laax and Falera are large, sprawling villages some klicks away from

each other. Murschetg, where the Laax base stations are located, is also a little way from Laax itself.

Best of the Slopes

One of the longest runs in the Alps off the Vorab Glacier takes you all the way into Flims along some easy reds and pleasant blues, but the run is best avoided at the end of the day when the last section gets mighty crowded. With the same end section the run off La Siala is almost as long and is deemed by the lift company as an "insider tip". Well, not much of a secret now. There is a lovely long black off the Vorab too, down to Alp Ruschein

Where to Eat and Party

La Vacca, next to the Plaun lift station, does superb lunch-time barbecues (+41 819 279962). The Ustria Startgels restaurant next to the Graubergbahn is also good for lunch as is Das Elephant at Crap Masegn. The Crap Bar in Laax Murschetg - Crap being local dialect for peak - is a must visit location for apres-ski. In Flims itself the Legna Bar at the bottom station is a popular rendezvous. The Rider's Palace is not only a good place to crash, but also the party centre of Laax Murschetg – especially for snowboarders.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

From Chur the best destination to access the downhill slopes by bus is Flims Dorf, Bergbahnen. The bus stop is adjacent to the gondola base station. Alternatively you can continue on the bus to Laax Murschetg (also adjacent to a gondola base station). It is also possible to access the lifts in Laax by bus from the railway station at Ilanz.

From Zurich it takes just under two hours, and from Basel just under three.

By Road

Allow about two hours to drive from Zurich or Lugano. Basel is roughly two and a half hours and Bern around three hours.

Accommodation

$$$$$ Waldhaus Mountain Resort & Spa, Flims
+41 819284848 http://www.parkhotel-waldhaus.ch

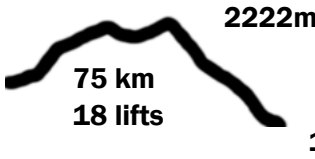
$$$$ Romantik Hotel Schweizerhof, Flims
+41 819281010 http://www.schweizerhof-flims.ch/

$$$ Arena Lodge, Flims
+41 819112400 http://www.arenaflims.ch

$ Backpacker Deluxe Hotel Capricorn, Laax
+41 819212120 http://www.swissbackpackers.ch

$ Riders Palace, Laax Murschetg
+41 819279700 http://www.riderspalace.com

Flumserberg



Language	Swiss German
Season	Nov-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 58
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.flumserberg.ch

It is barely an hour by train from Zurich (90km away) to Unterterzen, via Ziegelbrücke. From there the fast gondola adjacent to the station takes you up to one of Switzerland's best kept secrets, Flumserberg.

Sadly it is no secret to the inhabitants of Zürich, so at weekends this place does get busy, but during the rest of the week some of the most varied slopes in Switzerland are virtually deserted.

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★
Walking	★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Snowboarders
- ✔ day trips from Zurich
- ✔ Weekend breaks

With stunning views over the Walensee, flexible accommodation options and proximity to Zurich Airport, this resort really is a perfect destination for a mid-week break.

Best of the Slopes

The Leist is the best and most challenging descent. There is also a 7km run from Maschgenkamm to Tannenheim.

Where to Eat and Party

There is nothing to offer by way of riotous apres-ski or fine dining. There are a few umbrella bars scattered around the mountains, with the busier ones at the end of the day near base stations like Tannenboden.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

Take any train to Ziegelbrucke and the Sargans train will connect on the adjacent platform. Alight at Unterterzen. Journey time is less than an hour from Zurich.

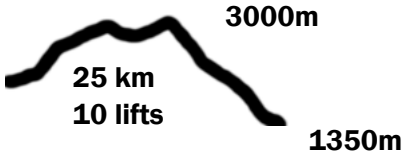
By Road

It is about an hour and a quarter by car from Zurich.

Accommodation

$$$ Hotel Cafrida, Flumserberg
+41 817331193 http://www.cafrida.ch

Glacier 3000



Language	French
Season	Oct-May
Adult Day Pass	CHF 63
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.glacier3000.ch

Ski/board	★★★
Walking	★★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Early and late season
- ✔ Guided off-piste
- ✔ Non-skiers

In some respects Glacier 3000 is a dysfunctional resort - halfway between Gstaad and Les Diablerets, it is claimed to be part of both their local ski systems; it reckons itself to be in Vaud but much of the ski area is in the Bernese Oberland and Valais; it promotes itself for its glacier skiing, but the more adventurous skiing is not on the glacier. In essence it is two areas, the north-facing area below the glacier with terrain down to Reusch, Col du Pillon and even Gstaad if the snow is good, and a glaciated plateau with dizzying views over Valais and beyond.

A large part of the top of Glacier 3000 is quite flat, which lends itself to some long schusses and to a scenic dog sled ride (group bookings only) - contact René Minartz at huskyman.ch for details.

Best of the Slopes

A new 8km red run in 2017, called the Red Run, begins at the Scex Rouge mountain top station, passes under the Oldenhorn and below the Cabane middle station, to where it

then joins the existing Martisberg Run, a drop from from 3000 down to 1300 meters.

There are some adrenalin-pumping off-piste runs, but a guide is recommended since there are some places you can really get it wrong. Some of the available off-piste runs include Dôme Peak to Les Diablerets Village (3016-1200m), Pierre Pointe by Restaurant Botta to Col du Pillon Valley Station (2971-1546m), Oldenegg to Reusch (1919-1350m), Nägelikelle to Oldenalp (2400-1840m) and various runs in the Martisberg area.

There is some relatively safe off-piste on the Glacier but it is best to get there early after new snow, as it gets tracked out quickly.

Where to Eat and Party

Bernie Ecclestone has a large stake in Glacier3000, so it is no surprise that Formula One features in the fabulous and architecturally outstanding Botta 3000 restaurant (named after the architect, Mario Botta). The restaurant at the Quille du Diable is very pleasant and has equally impressive views from a craggy cliff top with the Rhône valley below and Verbier beyond.

Even more spectacular are the views from a 107m long suspension bridge and walkway, built in 2014 and sponsored

by Tissot that connects the viewing platform at the restaurant to the Scex Rouge peak.

There is no accommodation in Glacier3000 – the nearest lodgings are in Gstaad and Les Diablerets.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Geneva. Bern is also a feasible option but has few international flights.

By Public Transport

One way to get to Glacier 3000 is to take the ASL train from Aigle to Les Diablerets. Here there are two ski areas either side of the village, one linking to Villars, the other via the Isenau area with Glacier 3000. There is also a bus from Les Diablerets to Saanen that passes the Glacier3000 base station at Col du Pillon. Alternatively it is possible to get to the Glacier 3000 base station from Gstaad on the same bus. Col du Pillon is about two hours from Lausanne and two and a half hours from Bern.

By Road

By car Col du Pillon is about an hour from Lausanne and about half an hour more from Bern. There is free parking at the base station.

Grimentz-Zinal

Language	French
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 61
Snow'n'Rail	No

www.valdanniviers.ch

Just south of Sierre, the villages of Chandolin, St-Luc, Grimentz, Vercorin and Zinal comprise Val D'Anniviers, a largely unconnected ski area regarded by many as comprising some of the most outstanding slopes in the entire Alps. Grimentz is probably the prettiest and most easily accessible of the villages and, since December 2013, has a lift connecting it to Zinal, where there is some good off-piste.

Ski/board	★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Advanced/Experts
- ✔ Off-piste
- ✔ Scenery & Setting

With a long, tortuous road journey to access the slopes and overshadowed by more famous resorts in Valais, this valley really is an almost undiscovered gem of wonderful, largely uncrowded slopes.

For non-skiers there is a fabulous snow-shoe walk to the ice caves under the Zinal glacier.

Best of the Slopes

The 10km run off Lona Bergstation back into Grimentz is a lovely run, with a steep section at the end if you found the early bits too easy.

Loads of great off-piste in Zinal, both marked and unmarked, and an 8km run off Corne de Sorebois. The Piste du Chamois is a fabulous long trail down to Grimentz, and now there is a lift back!

Where to Eat and Party

Grimentz has the better apres-ski. Chez Florio at the bottom of the slopes is always busy at the end of the day, and Le County Pub and the Domino are good places to head off to for evening drinks. Disco Shaddock is open into the small hours. Meleze is a fun place to eat with a hot stone cook-it-yourself menu option but there are a good half a dozen reasonable restaurants to choose from in the village.
In Zinal, le Besso is the best place to eat and le Pub is as good as any place to go for a drink.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Geneva but there are also international flights to the nearer Sion airport.

By Public Transport

Zurich and Basel are almost four hours away by public transport, and Bern and Geneva are almost three hours away.

From the train station in Sierre, on the main Geneva Airport-Brig line, you need to take a bus initially to Vissoie and then another onto Grimentz, télécabine or Zinal TZS.

By Road

The drive from Zurich and Basel are each over three hours, and from Bern and Geneva over two hours.

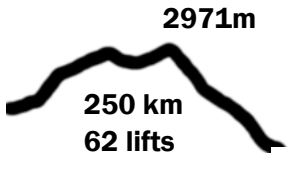
Accommodation

$$$ Hotel Cristal, Grimentz
+41 274753291 http://www.cristalhotel.ch

$$$ Mountain Heaven Chalets, Grimentz
+44 1516251921 http://www.mountainheaven.co.uk

$ A la Pointe de Zinal, Zinal
+41 274751164 http://www.lapointedezinal.ch

Gstaad Mountain Rides



Language	German/French
Season	Dec-Mar (Sector 1)
Adult Day Pass	CHF 63
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.gstaad.ch

Ski/board	★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★★★★
Walking	★★★★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★★★

Good for:
- ✔Intermediates
- ✔Beginners
- ✔Snowboarders
- ✔Luxury breaks
- ✔Scenery & Setting

Gstaad is, surprisingly given its reputation, rather a pretty and unassuming town some distance away from many of the slopes associated with it. However, the Gstaad Mountain Rides pass does give you access to around a dozen different communities dotted around the beautiful Saanenland and Pays d'Enhaut, and nine different, unconnected and very varied ski area in both Schweizerdeutsch and French speaking Switzerland.

Some of the slopes have relatively short seasons and there are not a lot of challenging runs, but Glacier 3000, on the road out to Les Diablerets and optionally covered on the same lift pass, is a snow-sure destination with some tough slopes below the glacier. My favourite slopes are those above Zweisimmen, on the Rinderberg and Parwengesattel, but the runs accessible from the ancient (and due to be replaced) Eggli gondola are also very pleasant.

The lifts out of Gstaad are on the edge of town, serving the small Wispile area and the large Eggli-La Videmanette area (which, uniquely, is a French-speaking area at its extremity). The infrequent, but scheduled and reliable, trains and buses can get you to all six sectors in Gstaad Mountain Rides.

If you enjoy mostly undemanding, scenic slopes, Gstaad is a fabulous destination. That isn't to say you can't find challenging skiing and good lift-served off-piste, but most runs are of intermediate standard. Gstaad is, of course, more than a ski and snowboard destination - there is a huge variety of other winter sports activities, including ice-skating in the heart of Gstaad, around 11 classic and skating cross-country circuits, 34 identified winter walks, five toboggan runs, one airboard piste and 14 snowshoe trails (four of which are clearly marked). For many years the rich and famous have descended on Gstaad, including Sophia Loren, to enjoy the glitz of hotels such as the Gstaad Palace.

Best of the Slopes

The best off-piste and best areas for snowboarding are above Saanenmöser and Schönried. The section above Saanen is good for long cruisy runs but the valley run to Gstaad gets large bare patches in warm and limited snow conditions and doesn't have artificial snow cover.

See the separate entry for Glacier3000 for the best off-piste and most snow-sure slopes.

Where to Eat and Party

Gstaad has a whole clutch of highly-rated restaurants in the valley, and the Saanenland is renowned for its cuisine. In the mountains one of the best choices is the gourmet Bergrestaurant Wasserngrat (+41 33 744 96 22) and in Gstaad itself, Restaurant Chesery (+41 33 744 24 51).

For apres-ski the FunFun bar and Richie's pub are good, and if you want to dress up the Palace Hotel is the ritzy place to go.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Geneva but there are also some international flights into Bern.

By Public Transport

The Montreux Oberland Bernois Railway (MOB) railway runs from Zweisimmen to Montreux, with stops along the way at Château-d'Oex, Les Granges, Rougemont, Saanen, Gstaad, Schönried and Saanenmöser , all of which give access to ski areas. Additionally buses run to Les Diablerets via the Col du Pillon, serving Glacier 3000.

Access to the slopes in Gstaad Mountain Rides Sector One can be reached in about two hours from Bern and Lausanne and around three hours from Basel or Zurich. See separate entries for Zweisimmen and Glacier3000.

By Road

Some parts of Sector 1 can be reached by car in less than an hour from Lausanne and Bern, and around two hours from Zurich or Basel.

Accommodation

$$$$$ Grand Hotel Park, Gstaad
+41 337484151 http://www.grandhotelpark.ch/

$$$$$ Gstaad Palace, Gstaad
+41 337485000 http://www.palace.ch

$$$$$ Grand Hotel Bellevue, Gstaad
+41 337480000 http://www.bellevue-gstaad.ch

$$$$ Le Grand Chalet, Gstaad
+41 337487676 http://www.grandchalet.ch

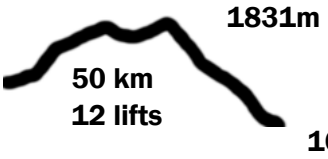
$ Saanen-Gstaad Youth Hostel, Saanen
+41 337441343 http://www.youthhostel.ch/en/

$$$ Hotel Alpine Lodge, Saanen
+41 337484151 http://www.alpinelodge.ch/

$$$ Hotel Hornberg, Saanenmöser
+41 337486688 http://www.hotel-hornberg.ch

$$$ Hotel Kernen, Schönried
+41 337484020 http://www.bruno-kernen.ch

Hoch-Ybrig



Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 53
Snow'n'Rail	No

http://www.hoch-ybrig.ch

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★★
Nordic	★★
Walking	★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★

Good for:
- ✔Intermediates
- ✔Beginners
- ✔Zurich day trippers

In the heart of Schwyz, the most traditional Swiss canton, is one of its oldest ski areas and the location of the first Swiss Ski School. Hoch-Ybrig has a loyal following of friendly regulars and day-trippers from Zurich, less than two hours away by a combination of train and bus (via Wädenswil and Einsiedeln), and little more than an hour by car.

Of the bottom stations Weglosen has the larger car park, but Laucheren is probably the easier to get to if you use the irregular bus service. Small lift queues can build up at weekends at the lift stations around Seebli, but they are nothing like skiers and snowboarders might experience in other countries.

There is certainly enough variety to justify a day's outing or a weekend break for skiers or snowboarders, both on and off-piste, and there is a very good park (with some huge jumps). Apart from around the beginners areas, it is possible to get around the resort without using surface lifts - although there

is one long but avoidable T-bar from Laucherenstöckli. There is a small, unconnected area for beginners at Oberiberg with two surface lifts.

At Ibergeregg there is also a small area with two surface lifts and it is possible to ski down to it off the Spirstock, and then on down to Laucheren on an unprepared ski trail.

Best of the Slopes

The run to Talstation Laucheren from Spirstock is a 5km long red/blue run.

There is a fabulous black run down to Weglosen, which is the only resort run down to this bottom station but it is not a difficult black. From Spirstock there is a trail down to Ibergeregg which is flat in places but incredibly scenic and usually prepared. From the top of the lifts at Ibergeregg it is

then possible to ski or snowboard back to Laucheren, but this unprepared trail is extremely narrow in places - the start of the trail is not well posted, so keep tight to skiers left after you exit the T-bar on the right.

Where to Eat and Party

There is little accommodation in the area and, since most visitors are day trippers, little apres ski. There are a couple of bars at the bottom stations.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

The best destinations to access the downhill slopes by public transport in this ski area are the bus stops at Hoch-Ybrig, Talstation Laucheren or Weglosen. Bus stops are adjacent to the lifts. Note that the return buses from both bottom stations are infrequent and stop relatively early - at the time of writing respectively 4.45 and 5.23 from Laucheren and Weglosen.

From Zurich the least travel time is one and a half hours with changes at Wadenswil and Einsiedeln.

By Road

The road distance from Zurich is around 60 km and the journey time is just over an hour.

Accommodation

$$ Rösslipost, Unteriberg
+41 554146030 http://www.roesslipost.ch

Ischgl & Samnaun

Language	German
Season	Nov-May
Adult Day Pass	€49
Snow'n'Rail	No

http://www.ischgl.com

The Silvretta Arena comprises a large area between quiet, duty-free Samnaun in Switzerland and party-town Ischgl in Austria.

There is some excellent skiing and snowboarding, particularly for intermediate skiers and snowboarders, and the area is largely clear of flats and unavoidable surface lifts.

Ski/board	★★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★
Walking	★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★★★★

Good for:

- ✔Intermediates
- ✔Beginners
- ✔Snowboarders
- ✔Party Animals (Ischgl)

The modern, efficient lifts, excellent park, high, well-groomed slopes and Ischgl's apres-ski give it an almost legendary status amongst those with a work hard, play hard ethic, contrasting with the more traditional, family atmosphere of Samnaun.

Plans to extend what is already a huge resort with new runs off Piz Val Gronda have hit environmental opposition and are currently on ice, so to speak.

Ischgl is easier to get to than Samnaun, and cheaper, even with Samnaun's duty-free status - there are customs posts on the pistes which, although I have never seen them manned,

are presumably there to stop smugglers using skis to smuggle contraband. Although lacking the machismo of some other resorts, for the intermediate skier or snowboarder this is one of the best resorts in the world.

Where to Eat and Party

In Ischgl the Trofana Alm and the Hotel Elisabeth's Schatzi bar are popular for apres ski. There's a great variety of places to eat, including some upmarket restaurants like the one in the Trofana Royal. The night life includes some of the raciest spots in the Alps, such as the table dancing at the Go-go bar in Hotel Madlein.

Samnaun is much more demure, although incongruously it has a very good fish restaurant, Hotel Haus Homann (+41 818619191).

Getting There

By Public Transport

You can get to Ischgl by public transport, but if you are heading off from Switzerland, you would probably be better off going to a resort with a station, like St Anton. Samnaun

can be reached by public transport, but it is over four hours from Zurich.

By Road

The road distance from Zurich to Ischgl is almost three hours, slightly longer to get to Samnaun.

Accommodation

$$$ Hotel Madlein, Ischgl
+43 54445226 https://www.madlein.com

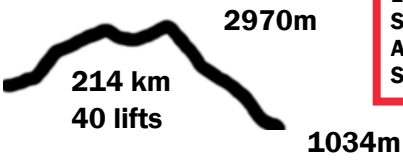
$$$ Hotel Trofana Alpin, Ischgl
+43 5444601 http://www.trofana-alpin.com/

$$ Hotel Garni Monte Bianco, Ischgl
+43 54445406 http://www.monte-bianco.at/

$$$ Des Alpes, Samnaun
+41 818685273 http://www.hotel-desalpes-samnaun.ch

$$$ Wellness Hotel Chasa Montana, Samnaun
+41 818619000 http://www.hotelchasamontana.ch

Jungfrau (Grindelwald, Wengen & Mürren)



Language	Swiss German
Season	Nov-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 64
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

https://www.jungfrau.ch

Ski/board	★★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Advanced
- ✔ Snowboarders
- ✔ Scenery & Setting

Winter sports really started here, amongst the stunning villages and mountains of the Jungfrau. The mountaineers came to conquer the Eiger from Kleine-Scheidegg, and then the ski racers came to conquer the Schilthorn, above Mürren.

Mürren is still the home of the world's oldest ski race, the Inferno, and where the famous Alpine scenes in James Bond's OHMSS were filmed in what is called Piz Gloria – a name associated with resorts in eastern Switzerland but transposed to the Schilthorn since the location in the movie was intended to be near St Moritz. Whereas the main slopes at Wengen and Grindelwald are connected, those at Mürren are separate.

Wengen is the home of what is probably the toughest ski race in the world, the Lauberhorn, and is also one of the most charming villages in the Alps. Like Mürren it is also car-free.

Grindelwald is a larger, busier community, not car-free like Wengen and Mürren, but it has cheaper accommodation, more nightlife and good access to all the same pistes as Wengen, as well as the less crowded slopes at First. First is where the best parks in the Jungfrau are located, including an 850m park at Bärgelegg, another at Oberjoch and a half-pipe usually set up at Schreckfeld.

Grindelwald is also the best choice for parties that include non-skiers, with a range of activities and diversions. Included amongst these is the 15km Big Pintenfritz from the Faulhorn, the longest toboggan run in Europe, named after the innkeeper who inaugurated the run as a bet.

Although Lauterbrunnen does not have access to the slopes, it is the gateway railway station for both Wengen and Mürren. The trains to Wengen then go on to Kleine Scheidegg, with its iconic view of the Eiger, and to Jungfraujoch. Jungfraujoch, at 3466m, is referred to as the Top of Europe, and is the highest railway station in Europe with dramatic views over the Aletsch Glacier and hundreds of Alpine peaks.

Best of the Slopes

The longest runs include the descents from the Männlichen to Grindelwald Grund, the run off the Lauberhorn into Wengen, and the black Schilthorn run to Mürren (which sometimes runs as far as Lauterbrunnen, weather permitting).

Where to Eat and Party

Grindelwald

The TiPi tent at Kleine Scheidegg tends to be quite lively when the resort is busy. People also stop off at the Holzerbar towards Grund. The main apres bars in town are the Avocado bar and the Espresso bar. Gepsi bar is recommended for a drink before or after dinner. Challi bar is like a cross between a bar and a club and tends to be better from 9pm onwards. Several eateries do meal deals for around ten francs per person: on Sunday it is burger day at the Eiger and the cafe lounge there and Pizza night in the Espresso bar, on Mondays it is Burrito night at the Memory bar in Hotel Eiger, Tuesday is Toastie night in Gepsi bar and Thursday is the excellent Salad day in the Eiger and the café lounge.

Wengen

With fabulous views of the Eiger, lunch at the Hotel Jungfrau at Wengernalp (+41 33 855 16 22), on the run back into Wengen, is an expensive but essential treat - one of the best mountain restaurants in the world. The station buffet at Kleine Scheidegg is good value and good grub, and the Tipirama wigwam there gets lively late afternoon. The Start Bar on the Lauberhorn is good too. In Wengen there is the Tanne bar, Eiger Bar and Crystal bar and the Hasenstall in the Silberhorn carries on late. The Rocks bar is a small English-run bar which shows live sports including premier league football. Sina's pub also has a deserved reputation for good value food.

Mürren

Piz Gloria is worth a visit, just for the Bond associations and the views. Nightlife is generally relaxed, but the Hotel Eiger is as good a place to visit for apres-ski activities. The Arvenstubli - Eiger Guesthouse has simple, good value, good quality food (+41 338565460).

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airports are Basel and Zurich.

By Public Transport

All the resorts are served by trains out of Interlaken Ost. It takes 53 minutes to Mürren, 44 minutes to Wengen, 33 minutes to Grindelwald and a short bus ride or walk up from Grindelwald station to the base station at First. Interlaken Ost is two hours from Basel and Zurich and one hour from Bern.

By Road

Although it is possible to drive to Grindelwald, both Wengen and Mürren are car-free so you will need to park in the car park in Lauterbrunnen then take public transport for these resorts.

The Jungrau is about two hours from Zurich and Basel and about an hour from Bern.

Accommodation

$$$$ Romantik-Hotel Schweizerhof, Grindelwald
+41 338545858 http://www.hotel-schweizerhof.com

$$$ Parkhotel Schönegg, Grindelwald
+41 338541818 http://www.parkhotelschoenegg.ch

$$$ Bodmi, Grindelwald
+41 338531220 http://www.bodmi.ch

$$$ Belvedere Swiss Quality Hotel, Grindelwald
+41 338531220 http://www.belvedere-grindelwald.ch/

$ Grindelwald Youth Hostel, Grindelwald
+41 338531009 http://www.youthhostel.ch/en/

$ Downtown Lodge, Grindelwald
+41 338287730 http://www.swissbackpackers.ch

$$$ Hotel Oberland, Lauterbrunnen
+41 338551241 http://www.hoteloberland.ch

$ Valley Hostel, Lauterbrunnen
+41 338552008 http://www.swissbackpackers.ch

$$$$ Hotel Eiger, Mürren
+41 338565454 http://www.hoteleiger.com/

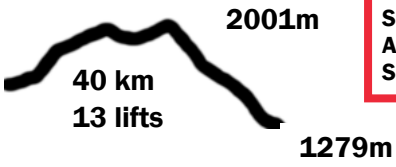
$$ Eiger Guesthouse, Mürren
+41 338565460 http://www.eigerguesthouse.com/

$$$ Romantik Hotel Schönegg, Wengen
+41 338553422 http://www.hotel-schoenegg.ch

$$$ Alpenrose, Wengen
+41 338553422 http://www.alpenrose.ch/

$$$$ Jungfrau, Wengernalp
+41 338551622 http://www.wengernalp.ch

Klewenalp



Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 51
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.klewenalp.ch

A small resort above the villages of Beckenried and Emmetten, Klewenalp has stunning views over Lake Lucerne towards the Rigi and the Mythens.

It is very conveniently located for a day trip from Luzern or from the towns and cities of Northern Switzerland.

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★
Walking	★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:

- ✔Intermediates
- ✔Beginners
- ✔Snowboarders
- ✔Non-skiers
- ✔Day-trippers

Unfortunately the section above Stockhütte and access from Klewenalp to the main runs still relies on surface lifts, there are a few flats (notably going in the direction of Klewenalp from Stockhütte), and there is no provision for snow-making - although the largely North-facing slopes do have a good snow record.

If you find yourself ending the day in the charming village of Emmetten, there is usually a shuttle bus back to Beckenried, plus the scheduled PostBus runs frequently to Beckenried and on to Stans.

If you do not want to take part in any skiing or snowboarding activities, there are plenty of other activities to do in the mountains. The scenery is spectacular, there are a few mountain restaurants and some excellent winter walks. In addition there is the fabulous 9km toboggan run from Klewenalp to Stockhütte-Emmetten and the tough 4km airboard and toboggan run near the Chälen chairlift.

Best of the Slopes

There is a good long run starting with blue runs down from Twäregg, continuing after Stockhütte (keep to skier's right) with a trail down to Emmetten.

It is also possible to get down to Beckenried along a couple of trails, conditions permitting, after the lovely red run (avoid the blue one) from Chäleneg via Tannebüel - a vertical drop of over 1500m. There is a lot of gentle off-piste if you turn left out of the modern Chälenegg chairlift.

Where to Eat and Party

The Panorama Schneebar above Klwenalp is the liveliest place on the mountain. For a drink and a cigarette, you can

wait for a bus in Emmetten right opposite the stop in the friendly Hotel Engel.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

The best destination to access the downhill slopes by public transport in this ski area is Beckenried, Post. The bus stop is 3 minutes from the cable car. Follow the signs.

From Zurich, Bern and Basel the least travel time to Beckenried is less than two hours via Lucerne and Stans. From Lucerne it is as little as 35 minutes.

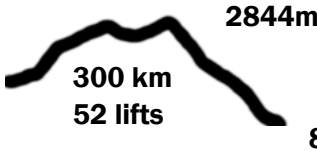
By Road

From Zurich, Bern or Basel the drive is less than two hours. From Lucerne it is only twenty minutes to Beckenried.

Accommodation

$$$$ Boutique Hotel Schlüssel, Beckenried
+41 416220333 http://www.schluessel-beckenried.ch/

Klosters



Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 70
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.klosters.ch

Klosters has been made famous by its connections with the British Royal Family, but it is actually a pleasantly informal village with good local amenities and access to the fabulous Parsenn mountain it shares with Davos, as well as the family-friendly Madrissa pistes.

There is plenty of off-piste and a long season, plus faster road and rail connections than Davos - although you can take the train round to Davos or ski over to access the other four mountains there.

Ski/board	★★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★★★★
Walking	★★★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★★★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Advanced/Expert
- ✔ Off-piste
- ✔ Scenery & Setting

Despite the relative accessibility of much of the off-piste, it is often not as safe as it looks. An avalanche in 1988 which killed Prince Charles's equerry on Gotschnawang was led by an experienced guide.

Best of the Slopes

There is a 12km run from the Weissfluh peak, 2844m to Küblis at 810m. The run off Madrissa into the village is also

almost 9k in length and drops 1500m. Also a 1km drop on the 7k run off Gotschnagrat.

Where to Eat and Party

As Alistair Scott noted in his 1989 ski guide to Switzerland, "most of the smartest apres-ski in Klosters takes place behind closed doors in private chalets". However Gaudy's at the foot of the Parsenn is a good spot to round off a day on the slopes. Most nightlife is centred on the hotels. The upmarket Walserhof (+41 81 410 29 29) is probably the best place to eat in town.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

Klosters, Platz is adjacent to the cable car for Parsenn. Klosters Dorf is adjacent to Madrisa.The travel time from Zurich is just under two hours, and from Basel and Bern just under three hours.

By Road

Zurich is less than two hours away by road, Basel around two and a half hours and Bern around three hours.

Accommodation

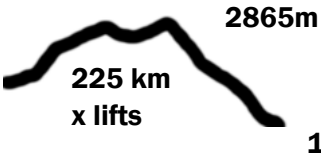
$$$$ Chesa Grischuna
+41 814222222 http://www.chesagrischuna.ch

$$$$ Vereina
+41 814102727 http://vereinahotel.ch

$$$ Hotel Walserhof
+41 814222222 http://www.walserhof.ch

$ Klosters Youth Hostel
+41 814221316 http://www.youthhostel.ch/en/

Lenzerheide



Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 75
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.lenzerheide.com

Ski/board	★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★★★

Good for:
- ✔Intermediates
- ✔Beginners
- ✔Snowboarders

Lenzerheide, apparently a favourite resort of Margaret Thatcher, is often overlooked as a winter sports holiday destination, but it's hard to understand why.

Lenzerheide has a number of ski areas in an arc around the village, including one in the hamlet of Churwalden. Since December 2013 neighbouring Arosa is linked by gondola with Lenzerheide and the combined resorts create the largest linked ski area in Graubünden and one of the ten largest in Switzerland.

There is a wide range of other winter sports activities and excellent infrastructure. There are plenty of good pistes for all abilities and the resort spreads across both sides of the valley, above and below the treeline, to provide ideal conditions at all times of the day.

Wendy Holdener hails from Lenzerheide and famously won the FIS World Cup Combined (Super-G and Slalom) in her hometown in 2016.

Best of the Slopes

The 11k run off Rothorn is very scenic but has both serious flats and serious steep sections. With a guide you can drop off and ski off-piste into Arosa, although now, with the resorts connected, it is far easier to get back than it used to be.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

From Zurich, changing to a bus in Chur, the first stop to access the largest section of the ski area is Canols, Rothornbahn. The bus stop is adjacent to the cable car. However a good free bus connects all the base stations.

By Road

Lenzerheide is less than two hours from Zurich.

Accommodation

$ The Lodge, Churwalden
+41 813562267 http://www.swissbackpackers.ch

$$$$ Guarda Val, Lenzerheide
+41 813858585 http://www.guardaval.ch

$$$ Hotel Kurhaus, Lenzerheide
+41 813841134 http://www.kurhaus-lenzerheide.ch

Les Diablerets

Language	French
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 54
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.diablerets.ch

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★
Nordic	★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Scenery & Setting

Les Diablerets means, literally, 'Home of the Devils', recalling a time before the Enlightenment when the mountains were seen as hostile and inhabited by evil spirits. Since the 18th Century the image of the mountains has changed significantly, and mountain communities thrive on a year round tourist industry. With the growth in tourism came the railways, and nearby Aigle became a hub for three mountain services, of which only the Les Diablerets service does not use a cog system.

Les Diablerets itself is a pretty village, famous for its annual film festival, Festival International du Film Alpin Les Diablerets, and its skiing, which takes place on the three very different mountains that surround the village.

Meilleret (1949m) is mostly below the tree line and connects to the busy Villars ski area. The Isenau (2120m) area has some pleasant sunny runs good for beginners and intermediates and a decent park, but closed at the time of

writing. Then there is the glacier on Diablerets at an often chilly but reliably snowsure 3000m – covered elsewhere as Glacier3000 but easily accessible by a Postbus or a courtesy bus from Les Diablerets.

Where to Eat and Party

For lunch try out the exclusive and attractive Auberge De L'Ours in Vers l'Eglise (+41 244 924400). The MTB is probably the busiest spot for apres-ski in the village. Also popular are the Ormonan and the Eurotel Victoria, with dancing into the small hours at Saloon la Pote and Atomix.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Geneva.

By Public Transport

Les Diablerets is the end stop on the ASL railway out of Aigle. The trip takes around 50 minutes. Typically, from Lausanne, the journey time is around one hour and forty-five minutes. There is also a bus service, via the base station for Glacier3000, to Gstaad and Saanen. The station is 15 minutes from the Meilleret base station and 10 minutes from Isenau's.

By Road

Les Diablerets is about an hour by car from Lausanne and an hour and forty minutes from Geneva. Parking is free.

Accommodation

$$ Hotel du Pillon - Relais du Silence
+41 244922209 http://www.hoteldupillon.ch/

$$ Hotel Les Sources
+41 244920100 http://www.hotel-les-sources.ch/

Les Diablerets and Leysin, in the Vaud Alps.

Leysin

Language	French
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 48
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

https://www.aigle-leysin-lesmosses.ch/

Leysin is one of the oldest of the Alpine resorts, with a history as a health resort as old as the 18th Century, although it did not become established as a significant centre until the 1890s with the narrow-gauge rack railway connection to Aigle.

From then on winter sports became popular without being a significant source of tourism. However the village declined as a health centre and by the 1950s was firmly established as a major winter sports destination.

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★
Families	★★★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Snowboarders
- ✔ Families
- ✔ Scenery & Setting

Although Leysin is a bit of a sprawl, it is an attractive village with a reasonable amount going on and some good slopes, particularly for boarders and intermediates. There are three parks in the ski area. It is only half an hour from Aigle and there is a courtesy bus that connects the ski area to the modest but reasonable Les Mosses terrain, sadly only served by surface lifts. There is also a small linked ski area beyond Les Mosses at La Lécherette and a good cross country circuit beneath them.

Leysin has a good park, a reasonable amount of lift-accessible off-piste and, on the summit of La Berneuse, a revolving restaurant with views across Lake Geneva, Les Dents du Midi and the Rhône Valley.

Where to Eat and Party

The Yeti Bar and le Lynx are lively spots in the village, and Club 94 carries on after everything else is closed. They do excellent fondue and raclette at La Fromagerie (+41 24 494 22 05).

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Geneva.

By Public Transport

The best stop on the train for the slopes is Leysin-Feyday. None the less the base station is a 15 minutes walk away – downhill on the way there, but an uphill slog coming back. Fortunately there is a courtesy bus to the slopes although it does not link with train times very well. A courtesy bus also runs from Solepraz to Les Parchets for the les Mosses ski area.

By Road

Leysin is about an hour by car from Lausanne and an hour and forty minutes from Geneva. A fee is required for parking.

Accommodation

$$ Hotel La Tour d'Ai
+41 244932280 http://www.hoteltourdai.ch

Lötschental

Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 55
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.loetschental.ch

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Car-free
- ✔ Families
- ✔ Scenery & Setting

There is much to like about the small car-free resort of Lauchernalp in the Lötschental with its beautiful views, sunny terraces, ski-in/ski-out accommodation and good snow record. It is excellent for beginners and families but also has enough to entertain accomplished day trippers with extensive lift-served off-piste. The lower slopes suffer in the afternoon from being south-facing and the valley run is not open early or late season, but the higher runs, served by a modern gondola and a new six seater chairlift, are seriously high and have excellent snow conditions and a good variety of runs and off-piste. The Lötschental was for many years isolated from neighbouring valleys until the railways arrived in the early 20th Century, and through its isolation it developed its own unique customs, including the fearsome Tschäggättä that features in the valley's carnival in February.

The journey from the north to Lauchernalp is spectacular. The last leg is by bus, up the unspoilt Lötsch valley, but the BLS RegioExpress Lötschberger train from Bern to Goppenstein is spectacular. For through trains the rail line has been replaced by the 35km Lötschberg Base Tunnel.

Best of the Slopes

The last part of this 14km run down to Wiler in the valley is often closed, but even so the descent off the Hockenhorngrat as far as Lauchernalp is breath-taking. Take a small detour to the right a few hundred metres down to one of the best viewpoints in the Alps.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airports are Basel and Zurich.

By Public Transport

The base station for Lauchernalp is in the Lötsch valley at Wiler, Seilbahn. Take the bus from Goppenstein railway

station on the old Lötschin the direction of Blatten. The bus stop is adjacent to the cable car base station. From Basel and Zurich the journey time is about two hours and fifty minutes and from Bern just over an hour and a half.

By Road

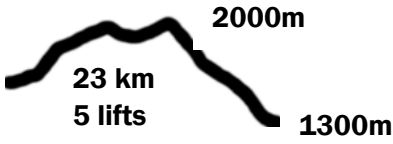
The Lötsch valley is about three hours by car from Basel and Zurich and two hours from Bern. Lauchernalp is car-free so you will need to park in Wiler.

Passes may be closed during the winter. However the Car Transport Lötschberg runs every 30 mins and every 15 mins at weekends between Kandersteg and Goppenstein.

Accommodation

$$ Alpenhotel Zur Wildi, Lauchernalp
+41 279391989 http://www.zur-wildi.ch

Malbun



Language	German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 48
Snow'n'Rail	No

https://tourismus.li/

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★
Nordic	★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Families

Landlocked within the landlocked nations of Switzerland and Austria, Liechtenstein hosts one tiny ski resort, Malbun.

Malbun is a spectacular drive from the motorway at Sargans in Switzerland, and is about 30 minutes by bus from Valbun, Liechtenstein's capital (itself 30 minutes by bus from Sargans station). There is a good range of skiing from nursery slopes through runs of increasing difficulty, including one short, steep black and some off-piste.

There is cross-country skiing in nearby Steg, and toboggan runs and winter walking trails in Malbun itself.

Apparently Prince Charles took Princess Diana to learn to ski in Lichtenstein, presumably in Malbun, to avoid the media waiting for them in Klosters.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

It takes a couple of hours to get to Malbun from Zurich by public transport, going via Sargans and Vaduz. The Malbun, Bergbahnen bus stop is adjacent to the chair lifts.

By Road

Malbun is about two and a half hours by car from Zurich.

Accommodation

$$$ Family Hotel Gorfion, Malbun
+423 265 9000 https://gorfion.li/

$$$ JUFA Hotel Malbun – Alpin-Resort
+43 57083800 https://www.jufa.eu/hotel/malbun/

Meiringen-Hasliberg

Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 57
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

https://haslital.ch

This family-friendly resort has a surprisingly good range of slopes for all abilities and styles, albeit in modest quantities. Famous for being where Sherlock Holmes met his demise, it makes a good day out from Interlaken or Luzern or a pleasant destination for a short break. It is a good choice for beginners and intermediates and rarely gets queues at the lifts.

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:
- ✔ **Intermediates**
- ✔ **Beginners**
- ✔ **Families**

You can take a bus from Meringen via Schwarzwaldalp to Grosse Scheidegg for a breathtaking five kilometre toboggan run from below the Eiger, with a 500 metre descent back down to the Chalet Schwarzwaldalp hotel and the return bus. The area is also popular with snowshoe walkers. For Sherlock Holmes fans, the small museum near the station, the Park Hotel Du Savage (renamed by Conan Doyle as the Englischer Hof in "The Final Problem")

and the Reichenbach Falls, where Holmes and Moriaty met their fate, are sure to be on the itinerary.

Best of the Slopes

The 3.3km run from Planplatten, 2245m, to Bidmi at 1423m is the best in the resort. The longest is off Glogghüss.

Where to Eat and Party

The Aquarium in Käserstatt and the Kuhstall in Mägisalp have reasonable apres-ski, although Meiringen itself is quiet.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airports are Basel and Zurich.

By Public Transport

Meiringen station is about 15 minutes walk from the cable car at Alpbach, or you can take a courtesy bus. Getting to Meiringen via Interlaken Ost or Lucerne takes about two and a half hours from Basel or Zurich. From Lucerne it takes one hour and ten minutes and, from Interlaken Ost, thirty five minutes.

By Road

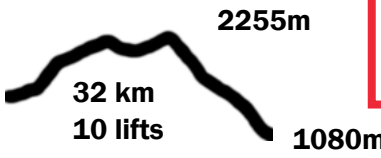
Meiringen is just over an hour away from Zurich, Basel and Bern by car, less than an hour from Lucerne and about half an hour from Interlaken.

Accommodation

$$$ Park Hotel du Savage
+41 339721880 http://sauvage.ch/

$$$ Hotel Victoria
+41 339721040 http://www.victoria-meiringen.ch

Melchsee-Frutt



Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 50
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.melchsee-frutt.ch/

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★
Nordic	★★
Walking	★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Day trips
- ✔ Families

Sitting on a sunny plateau surrounded by mountain peaks, car-free, family-friendly Melchsee-Frutt is a pleasant day trip with its well-priced passes and varied pistes.

There is something for all standards, but it is effectively three resorts in one. There are some (mostly challenging) runs off Bonistock down as far as Stockalp, a series of largely intermediate runs off Balmeregghorn and Erzegg (connected by a lift and a ropeway to Melchsee-Frutt), and a decent beginners and children's area near the village centre (sadly served by a T-bar).

For tobogganists there is an 8k run down to Stöckalp, which also constitutes the blue run back down and can get busy at time.

Best of the Slopes

The run from Bonistock to Stöckalp is 7km in length and drops over 1000m, it is black most of the way down, but is wide, largely lies below the tree line and is very scenic with its views over the Melchtal.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airports are Basel and Zurich.

By Public Transport

The base station for Melchsee-Frutt is at Stöckalp, about an hour from Lucerne. Take the train to Sarnen and a bus for the last leg. From Basel, Zurich and Bern it is a little over two hours.

By Road

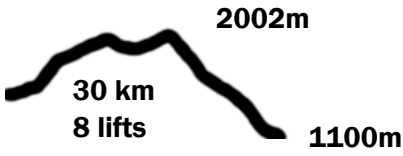
Stöckalp is forty minutes from Lucerne and around an hour and a half from Basel, Bern and Zurich.

Accommodation

$$ Alpenhotel Glogguis, Melchsee-Frutt
+41 416697777 http://www.glogghuis.ch

$$ Berghotel Bonistock, Melchsee-Frutt
+41 416691230 http://www.bonistock.ch

Moléson



Language	French
Season	Dec-Mar
Adult Day Pass	CHF 35
Snow'n'Rail	No

https://www.moleson.ch/

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★
Nordic	★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Day trippers

A small resort known as the Balcony of the Pre-Alps, Moléson-sur-Gruyères lies below the 2002m peak of Le Moléson, from where there are spectacular views of Gruyères, the Jura, Lake Geneva and the Alps as far as Mont Blanc

There is enough piste here to justify a day trip (or longer for novices and early intermediates). There are also several other small resorts in the area, all much cheaper than the Alpine resorts, with a reasonable snow record and the closest slopes to Fribourg. Moléson probably offers the most variety and challenge in the area. It also has a superb 4km toboggan run.

Best of the Slopes

The Piste du Sommet run off Le Moléson is probably the most varied and challenging run in the Fribourg Region, with a distance of around 4km and a drop from 2002m at the top of Le Moléson down to 1315m at Les Joux. The views from the summit and top section of the run are spectacular.

Where to Eat and Party

You are in Gruyères, so it would be churlish not to take in a fondue while you are here. At Restaurant de l'Observatoire, atop Le Moléson at 1982m, you can take in the stunning views while you eat.

Getting There

By Public Transport

From Fribourg take the train to Bulle then another to Gruyères, then a bus to Moléson-sur-Gruyères. The bus stop is next to the funicular car park.

By Road

Bern and Lausanne are roughly an hour away and Fribourg a little over half an hour by car.

Accommodation

$$ Hôtel de Ville, Gruyères
+41 269212424 https://hoteldeville.ch/

Nendaz

Language	French
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 75
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

https://www.nendaz.ch/

Ski/board	★★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★
Walking	★★★★
Families	★★★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Advanced/Experts
- ✔ Off-piste
- ✔ Families

The 4 Vallées is one of the world's outstanding ski destinations, but is only loosely connected in places. Where you end up in the circuit will probably have a large bearing on where you will spend most of your time on the slopes, but also on how much you spend.

Nendaz provides a cheaper alternative to Verbier for those who can do without the wild night-life. It has stunning views over the Rhône valley and is a scenic 15k drive from Sion. It also probably provides better access to Mont Fort and many of the challenging off-piste slopes the 4 Vallées are famous for - and the area is justly famous if you love adrenalin-pumping runs. Do use a guide if you want to explore the back of Mont-Fort, although there are a significant amount of safe unprepared runs and off-piste within the bounds of the main pistes where you do not need a guide, such as the Gentianes and Tortin trails.

Getting back to Nendaz from most parts of the 4 Vallées requires you to either take the Plan-du-Fou cable car down, navigate an often icy, mogulled itinerary or take the courtesy bus from Siviez. There are several lift passes available in the 4 Vallées, the main options being whether to choose the Thyon pass (including Haute-Nendaz, Veysonnaz, and Thyon/Les Collons), the Verbier section, a small section at Bruson or one covering the entire region of the 4 Vallées including Mont Fort.

The Hôtel Nendaz 4 Vallées & Spa in Haute-Nendaz has a good spa.

Best of the Slopes

You have access to all the best slopes out of Verbier, but also some tough runs on this side of the 4 Vallées. Try the couloirs on Col Du Vez to get your blood racing. The Tortin trail from Chassoure is an essential rite of passage for strong intermediates. Above Combatseline, there are some relatively easy blacks at Greppon Blanc and further East in the Veysonnaz section some good long challenging reds and some gentle blue runs around Thyon.

Where to Eat and Party

Apres-ski starts at Les Etagnes and carries on late at the Canadian Pub. For good food the Gariko Lounge Bar Restaurant (+41 272881368) is recommended. Skibar Le BoB is a popular watering hole on the way back into Nendaz.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Geneva, although Sion has an international airport too.

By Public Transport

Take the bus from Sion to Haute-Nendaz, telecabine. From Haut-Nendaz there is a courtesy bus to Siviez, which runs every 20 mins and takes you quickly to the central section of the 4 Vallées.

The journey times to Nendaz from Zurich and Basel are approximately three and a half hours, from Geneva two and a half hours and from Bern just over two hours.

By Road

Zurich and Basel are round three hours by car. Geneva and Bern are just under two hours.

Accommodation

$$ Le Deserteur Hotel, Nendaz
+41 272882455 http://www.ledeserteur.ch

$$$ Hôtel Nendaz 4 Vallées & Spa
+41 276111111 https://www.hotelnendaz4vallees.ch

Obersaxen

Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 58
Snow'n'Rail	No

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★★
Nordic	★★★★
Walking	★★★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Empty slopes

A German-speaking community of around 800 people in the middle of Romansh Surselva, Obersaxen is a large, but little-known ski resort on a long plateau overlooking the Rhine Valley. It's most famous son is the World Cup & Olympic champion Carlo Janka. Above Obersaxen the ski area is dominated by four peaks, with most runs on the North-facing Obersaxen side. There are also several long valley runs on the South side of beautiful Val Lumnezia, although two of these require you to take the Vrin Postbus or the irregular complementary ski bus back to Vella, where the only lift on the Val Lumnezia side is situated. The ski area is easily accessed by bus from the first town on the Rhine, Ilanz, but most skiers and snowboarders don't make it past nearby Flims, so the slopes are always uncrowded. You can generally hack around the resort using chairlifts and avoiding surface lifts, although some of the runs linking different parts of the resort are a little flat in places - keep your speed up on these sections if you don't want to skate/unclip. There is a wonderful variety of runs, however, and some outstanding off-piste, especially either side of the Piz Sezner chairlift. With most of the

120km of pistes above 1500m and North-facing, and the four top stations at Piz Mundaun, Hitzeggen, Stein and Piz Sezner all above 2000m, the snow record is good, but there are plenty of snow cannons too. I love this resort and find it surprising it is not better known.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

It takes about two hours forty minutes to get to Obersaxen Meierhof, Talstation, the best bus stop for the Obersaxen. The bus runs from Ilanz train station and stops at various bottom stations. For Meierhof Talstation get off at Valata (Obersaxen), or ski down from the Surcuolm stop for the Valata skilift.

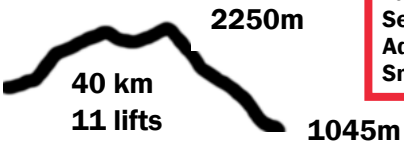
By Road

The resort is around two hours by car from Zurich.

Accommodation

$$$ Hotel Surselva, Obersaxen
+41 819331616 http://hotel-surselva.ch/

Pizol



Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 54
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.pizol.com

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★★
Nordic	★
Walking	★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★

Good for:

- ✔Intermediates
- ✔Beginners
- ✔Zurich Day trippers
- ✔Spa

Pizol means high peak in Romansh and the resort certainly has a huge vertical drop when the snow lies in the Rhine valley. The resort has a great range of intermediate cruising and has some fabulous off-piste and ski touring above the tree line.

Day trippers can make Bad Ragaz, below the ski area, by train in 80 minutes from Zurich and there is a ski bus connecting you to the base station. The town is a well-established holiday destination with a wealth of diversions for longer stays and a good spa.

The area is known as Heidiland because here was the reputed home of the eponymous heroine. There is an interesting walk around locations associated with the stories.

There are two ways to access Pizol, either from the Bad Ragaz side where the base station is a little outside the town, or from Wangs (a short bus ride from Sargans). The resort is efectively two separate ski areas with a couple of flattish T-

bars connecting them up. On the Bad Ragaz side the middle station is Pardiel and has a good range of amenities. Personally I prefer the slopes on this side to the slopes above Wang, but it is only on the Wang side you can ski all the way down to the valley station.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

There are two choices for getting to Pizol. One is to get off the train at Sargans and take a bus to Wangs. The other is to take the train to Bad Ragaz and take the bus to the other base station. In both cases the journey time from Zurich is around an hour and twenty minutes.

By Road

Pizol is around one hour and fifty minutes by car from Zurich.

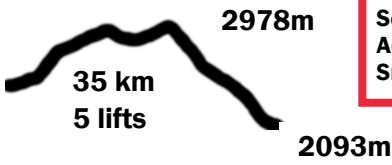
Accommodation

$$$$ Grand Hotel, Bad Ragaz
+41 813033030 http://www.resortragaz.ch

$$ Esos Hotel Quelle, Bad Ragaz
+41 813026081 http://www.esoshotelquelle.com

Pizol

Pontresina



Language	Swiss German
Season	Oct-May
Adult Day Pass	CHF 35
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

https://www.pontresina.ch

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★
Nordic	★★★★
Walking	★★★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★★★

Good for:

- ✔ **Intermediates**
- ✔ **Advanced/Expert**
- ✔ **Long season**
- ✔ **Cross-country and walks**

A few miles from St Moritz, Pontresina is a small, elegant village in the Engadin with the best access for Diovalezza and Lagalb, 20 minutes away by train or bus. It is also very close to some of the best cross country skiing in Switzerland.

Although the accommodation is largely upmarket, there is a good hostel conveniently located next to the railway station.

Diavolezza enjoys a long season, often from October until May, but Diovalezza also often shuts for a couple of weeks or so from late November. During this period Lagalb will usually be open, but if you set your heart on doing the Diavolezza glacier do check the lift is operating before you go.

There are no amenities at Diovalezza and Lagalb except ticket offices and mountain railways.

The Engadin provides some of the very best winter walks and cross-country circuits, and Pontresina is a good base to take advantage of them.

Best of the Slopes

Diovalezza base station is high, so it provides good long runs in both early and late season. Round the back of Diovalezza is the 10 km glacier descent to Morteratsch along a marked trail. Lagalb is a good area for free-riding.

Where to Eat and Party

Pontresina is not the place for a lively nightlife and, being away from the pistes, does not have a real apres-ski ambience. The hotel bars are generally stylish and the Pitschna Scena is as good a place as any for a bar atmosphere and pub grub. More upmarket is the Gourmet Restaurant Kronenstubli (+41 81 830 30 30) and I also like the Hotel Restaurant Saratz (+41 81 839 40 00)

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich. There is a private airport nearby at Samedan.

By Public Transport

Pontresina lies on the UNESCO World Heritage Bernina Express route between Chur and Tirano, one of the most memorable railway journeys in the world. It takes around three and a half hours to get to Pontresina from Zurich. Both Lagalb and Diavolezza are just a few minutes on the train from Pontresina, with the base stations adjacent to the railway stations.

A bus also runs between the base stations and to St Moritz, Pontresina and Celerina.

By Road

Pontresina is almost three hours by car from Zurich.

Accommodation

$$$$ Grand Hotel Kronenhof, Pontresina
+41 818303030 http://www.kronenhof.com

$$$$ Walther, Pontresina
+41 818393636 http://www.hotelwalther.ch

$$$ Sporthotel, Pontresina
+41 818389400 http://www.sporthotel.ch

$ Pontresina Youth Hostel, Pontresina
+41 818427223 http://www.youthhostel.ch/en/

Saas-Fee

Language	Swiss German
Season	July-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 73
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.saas-fee.ch/

Ski/board	★★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★★★

Good for:

- ✔Intermediates
- ✔Beginners
- ✔Snowboarders
- ✔Snow sure
- ✔Scenery & Setting
- ✔Spa

One of the great Alpine resorts, Saas-Fee in Saastal is high, the slopes are north-facing and there is a glacier. As a result there is skiing almost all year-round and a long peak season.

The runs are good, not as good or as extensive as nearby Zermatt, but there are miles of excellent pistes for intermediates and very few flats. Nearby Saas-Grund and Saas-Almagell are often uncrowded and have some off-piste that isn't tracked out when that at Saas-Fee is.

Car-free Saas-Fee has beens rated the most ecological resort in the Alps. It also has a lively night life. In recent years it has offered a season pass for less than the cost of four days skiing if purchased early enough in the season.

Answer for trivia Quiz: George Michael stayed at the Ferienart in Saas-Fee to film the cheesy video for "Last Christmas".

Best of the Slopes

The 9k, 1700m descent from Mittlelallalin takes you into the village or you can cut across and ski all the way into Saas-Almagell.

Where to Eat and Party

The Allalin has the highest revolving restaurant in the world, although the food and service are unexceptional. Mühle is a good place to grab a drink at the end of a hard day on the slopes and Popcorn, near the bus station, is a popular shop cum bar cum nightclub for later on. Don Ciccio Ristorante-Pizzeria is recommended for good value Italian food and wine (+41 0279574020).

Getting There

By Air

Geneva, Basel and Zurich airports are all roughly the same distance from Saas-Fee. Sion airport is the closest, but has relatively few flights.

By Public Transport

From Visp the last leg of the journey to Saas-Fee is by bus. At busy times you may need to book your return bus.

The journey time from Geneva is around three and a half hours, from Zurich and Basel around three hours and from Bern around two hours.

By Road

Basel and Zurich are roughly three and a half hours away, Geneva around three hours and Bern two and a half hours. Since the resort is car free you need to park in the multi-

story car park on the edge of the village and then walk or hire an electric taxi to get around.

Accommodation

$$$$$ Ferienart Resort & Spa, Saas-Fee
+41 279581900 http://www.ferrienart.ch

$$$ Wellnesshotel Pirmin Zurbriggen, Saas-Almagell
+41 279572301 http://www.zurbriggen.ch

$$$ Hohnegg Alpine Resort, Saas-Fee
+41 279581070 http://www.hohnegg.ch

$$ Hotel Elite Saas-Fee
+41 279586060 http://www.elite-saas-fee.ch/

$ wellnessHostel4000: Saas-Fee
+41 279585050 http://www.youthhostel.ch/en/

St Anton

Language	German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	€53
Snow'n'Rail	No

https://www.stantonamarlberg.com

I unreservedly love St Anton, in the beautiful Arlberg region, possibly the most complete ski resort in the world. I have had so many fabulous trips to St Anton.

It´s an easy drive from Switzerland, it is a destination served by rail from the UK and it is reasonably well served by a number of airports. The skiing is awesome, there is bags of accessible off-piste and the village is lively, although perhaps not quite as much so as it once was.

Ski/board	★★★★★
Snowpark	★★★
Nordic	★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★★★★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Advanced/Experts
- ✔ Snowboarders
- ✔ Party Animals
- ✔ Scenery & Setting

With new lifts for the 2016/7 season the resorts of Lech and Zurs are again accessible via the lift system, making this one of the most attractive circuits for both good off-piste and long cruisy runs.

Best of the Slopes

Whilst most skiers and snowboarders head up over the other side, I particularly like the runs on Rendl. It's normally

much quieter than other parts of the resort and the run back to the resort isn't as crazy as the ones off Galzig. Rendl also has some good off-piste. A lot of hard core off-piste takes place on the Valluga. However, since there is something like 200km of lift-served off-piste in addition to the 300-odd of regular piste, you don't need to go far to find somewhere to make fresh track.

Where to Eat and Party

For lunch the cosy Hospiz Alm in St Christoph does a great Tiroler gröstl (+43 544 63625)

On the valley run down lie a couple of legendary bars. The Mooserwirt - reputedly the bar serving more beer than anywhere in the whole of Austria - and the Krazy Kangaruh are probably the liveliest apres-ski destinations in the whole Alps.

You're spoiled for choice in the evening where to party, but the Base Camp is a good place to start and I like the Piccadilly for its ambience and live music

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Innsbruck, but Zurich is also doable.

By Public Transport

It is less than two and a half hours to get to St Anton on the through trains to Austria that stop off at St Anton on their way to Innsbruck.

By Road

It takes about two and a half hours to drive to St Anton from Zurich. You will need a motorway carnet to drive on the roads in Austria. You also should watch out for speed traps around the border, and where to cross is not always clear unless you have a SatNav.

Accommodation

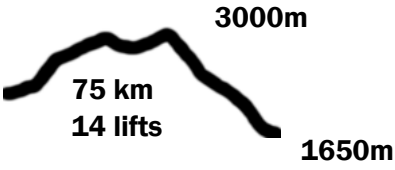
There are bags of accommodation options in St Anton, but central locations are pricey and some of the cheaper places are a schlep away from the slopes and nightlife, or only cater for weekly bookings.

$$$$ Sporthotel St. Anton
+43 544631110 http://sporthotel-st-anton.business.site/

$$$ Hotel Schwarzer Adler
+43 544622440 https://www.schwarzeradler.com

$$ Hotel Garni Erwin Falch
+43 54462068 http://www.hotel-erwin.at/

St-Luc/Chandolin



Language	French
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 58
Snow'n'Rail	No

https://www.valdanniviers.ch/

Long after many resorts have closed, St Luc and its connected resort in Val D'Anniviers of Chandolin still have resort runs and untracked off-piste. The villages require navigating some of the most tortuous roads in the Alps (although there is a bus service from Vissoie for the faint-hearted or car-less), but the journey is compensated for by the destination. The views across the Rhône valley to Crans-Montana beyond are spectacular.

Ski/board	★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Advanced/Expert
- ✔ Off-piste
- ✔ Scenery & Setting

This side of the valley is even quieter than Grimentz and even Zinal, and the equipment on the whole is not as modern, but when there is good snow this is as good as it gets with beautifully groomed, quiet slopes above and below the tree line and acres of accessible off-piste.

Personally I find the slopes easier to get to from St Luc than Chandolin, and some of the best of the slopes lie on the St

Luc side. Also the slopes are accessed by a funicular from St Luc.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Geneva.

By Public Transport

Zurich and Basel are almost four hours away by public transport, and Bern and Geneva are almost three hours away.

From the train station in Sierre, on the main Geneva Airport-Brig line, you need to take a bus initially to Vissoie and then another onto either for St-Luc FLC or Chandolin, Télésiège.

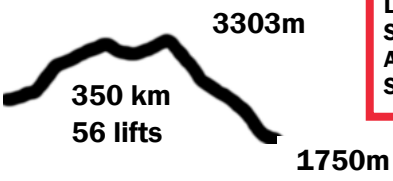
By Road

The drive from Zurich and Basel are each over three hours, and from Bern and Geneva over two hours.

Accommodation

$$$$ Parkhotel Bellevue & Spa
+41 336738000 http://www.parkhotel-bellevue.ch

St Moritz (the Engadin)



Language	Swiss German
Season	Nov-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 79
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

https://www.engadin.stmoritz.ch

Ski/board	★★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★★
Nordic	★★★★★
Walking	★★★★½
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★★★★★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Snowboarders
- ✔ Advance/Experts
- ✔ Non-skiers
- ✔ Scenery & Setting

Reputedly Johannes Badrutt wagered some English summer guests the cost of their stay at the Hotel Kulm in St Moritz if they did not enjoy wintering there as much. He won his bet and with that the winter sports industry was born.

Badrutt and his son, Casper, were responsible for a series of innovations, including coining the term Palace to describe a grand hotel and creating the world's first bobsleigh course. Thanks to their industry, and two Olympic Games, St Moritz is now the most famous winter sports resort in the world.

Long favoured by the rich and famous, amongst the celebrities who have shown a preference for St Moritz are Prince Harry and King Carl Gustav of Sweden. Charlie Chaplin was reputedly the first man to drive to St Moritz in

the winter, and Alfred Hitchcock kept a suite at the Palace Hotel for many years.

Whilst it is undoubtedly and justifiably renowned for the jet set clientele it attracts - there is a private airport at nearby Samedan - this is both a tribute to its appeal and is also misleading, in that the Engadin valley is not just for the affluent few. Along the wide valley floor of the Upper Engadin there is plenty of affordable accommodation to be found (including an excellent youth hostel), some fabulous skiing and snowboarding and probably a greater variety of world-class winter sports activities than anywhere else in the world. Every winter sports enthusiast really should visit this corner of Switzerland at some time in their life!

Best of the Slopes

For the experienced, there is both the World Cup run off Corviglia to St Moritz Dorf and the amazingly scenic 9km Hahnensee descent from Corvatsch down to St Moritz-Bad, although the pistes on these mountains are mostly for intermediate level skiers and boarders.

The most challenging runs are probably those around Piz Nair and there is a fair amount of lift-served off-piste. A bus ride away, Diovalezza has a leg-burning, adrenalin-pumping, long descent on the famous 10km off-piste glacier trail to Morteratsch, whilst the Lagalb also has a couple of good runs for experienced skiers and boarders.

Although you won't wear skis, for downhill exhileration try the St. Moritz-Celerina Olympic Bobrun.

Where to Eat and Party

The Corviglia top station has a bunch of restaurants, including the world renowned, rather expensive and quaintly named La Marmite (+41 81 833 6355). The restaurant at the top of Piz Nair is also good, but El Paradiso is my favourite (+41 81 833 4002).

A lot of the nightlife and dining centres around the plush hotels like Hotel Laudinelli, Hotel Schweizerhof and Badrutt's Palace. The Post Haus is a good place to fritter away some large denomination bank notes.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich, but for the jet set there is a private airport nearby in Samedan.

By Public Transport

The compelling train ride from Chur on the UNESCO World Heritage Bernina Express is unique – sit back and enjoy it as the journey time from Zurich to St Moritz is three and a half hours.

St Moritz station is 15 minutes walk uphill from the mountain railway for Corviglia, but it is more convenient to take bus #1 or #9 to St Moritz Bad Signalbahn from the station. Alternatively alight from train one stop earlier in Celerina, with a five minutes walk to the Marguns gondola base station.

For Corvatsch, take bus #1 from St Moritz station to Surlej Corvatschbahn.

By Road

It takes around two hours forty minutes to drive from Zurich.

Accommodation

There is a wide range of accommodation in St Moritz itself, but Celerina and Surlej Silvaplana, as well as the area around St Moritz Bad also have good access to the slopes. And the public transport is both exceptionally reliable and is covered by lift passes.

$$$ Misani, Celerina
+41 818398989 http://www.hotelmisani.ch

$$$ Hotel Chesa Rosatsch, Celerina
+41 818370101 http://www.hotelrosatch.ch

$$$$ Hotel Chesa Surlej, Surlej
+41 818387575 http://www.chesa-surlej.ch

$$$ Nira Alpina, Surlej
+41 818386969 http://niraalpina.com

$$$$$ Kempinski Grand Hotel des Bains, St Moritz
+41 818383838 http://www.kempinski-stmoritz.com

$$$$$ Badrutt's Palace, St Moritz
+41 818371000 http://www.badruttspalace.com

$$$$$ Kulm, St Moritz
+41 818368000 http://www.kulmhotel-stmoritz.ch

$$$$$ The Carlton, St Moritz
+41 818367000 http://www.carlton-stmoritz.ch

$$$$$ Suvretta House, St Moritz
+41 818363636 http://www.suvrettahouse.ch

$$$ Waldhaus am See, St Moritz
+41 818366000 http://www.waldhaus-am-see.ch

$$ Hotel Bären, St Moritz
+41 818366000 http://www.hotelbaeren.com/

$ St Moritz Bad Youth Hostel, St Moritz
+41 818366111 http://www.youthhostel.ch/en/

$ Randolins Backpackers, St Moritz
+41 818308383 http://www.swissbackpackers.ch

Savognin

Language	Romansh
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 57
Snow'n'Rail	No

https://savognin.graubuenden.ch

In the heart of Graubünden lies the little known but extensive resort of Savognin. The resort is a historic Romansh-speaking village, in the Surses valley on the route to the Julier Pass, south of Chur and Lenzerheide and north of the Engadin. It's a good family-friendly base for visiting other ski areas and attractions in the area (with winter tyres and sometimes snow chains).

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★★★★
Apres-ski	★★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Families

It has some very good pistes itself, particularly for learners and intermediates, but also with a few challenging runs and off-piste areas.

Unfortunately there are only surface lifts to reach all but the main runs from Piz Martegnas down to the base station, which lies at the foot of the valley below the village.

Romansh is an ancient language, left behind from Roman times and almost subsumed by the invasions of Allemanic and Frankish tribes. Unfortunately German is widely spoken for the benefit of visitors, but it is one of the most delightful things to visit a local bar and hear Romansh spoken – it is almost as if people are reciting poetry, so graceful is the language.

Where to Eat and Party

The Tigia restaurant at Radons does a number of regional specialities. Roggi's Baizli is the lively heart of mountain eating and drinking. For apres, the locals often head to James Beach Bar on their way down.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

The bus stop for the pistes is Savognin Cresta. It is a 10 minute walk down to the base station from the bus stop, but there is also a courtesy bus. From Zurich travel time is just under three hours with a change from train to bus at Chur.

From Basel the least travel time is 3 hrs 42 mins with as few as 1 changes going via Chur.

By Road

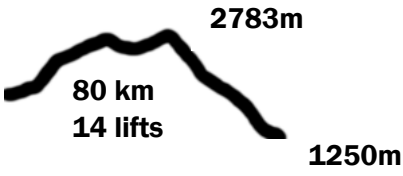
It is just under two hours from Zurich by car.

Accommodation

$$$ Cube Hotel, Savognin
+41 816591414 http://www.cube-savognin.ch

$$ Ferienwohnungen Surses Alpin, Savognin
+41 816691010 http://www.sursesalpin.ch

Scuol



Language	Romansh
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 57
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

https://scuol.engadin.com

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★
Nordic	★★★★
Walking	★★★★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★★★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Spa
- ✔ Cross-country & walks

Romansh-speaking Scuol lies in the remote Lower Engadin, alongside the Inn river and below the majestic peaks of the Silvretta and the Dolomites.

It has been a well-heeled spa town since the 19th Century but expanded as a holiday destination with the arrival of the railway in 1913, and established itself as a winter sports centre with the opening of the first ski lift in 1956. With its range of beautiful, south-facing slopes, modern queue-free lifts and ample off-piste it is one of my favourite medium-sized resorts.

Scuol Tarasp station lies at the end of the Eastern section of the Rhaetian Railway, next to the gondola bottom station and also conveniently next to the Youth Hostel. The centre of Scuol and the main Bogn Engiadina spa are about 10 minutes' walk away or two stops on the bus. The beginners' area is at the top of the gondola stop at Motta Naluns, although the Ski School offices are at the bottom station.

Best of the Slopes

There is a wonderful 14k descent from Bergstation Salaniva to Sent, although it requires you to take a courtesy bus back to Scuol to get you back up the mountain. The run off Schlivera to Ftan is very pleasant, and the lovely red run from Motta Naluns to Scuol has some excellent off-piste variations.

Where to Eat and Party

There are a couple of bars at the bottom of the gondola, but apres-ski is fairly muted in Scuol. A good place to eat, particularly for steaks, is Trais Portas (+41 081 860 38 20).

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

Scuol-Tarasp Rhaetian Railway station is adjacent to the gondola valley station. Changing at Landquart, journey time from Zurich is around two hours and forty minutes.

By Road

It is about two and three quarter hours by car to Scuol.

Accommodation

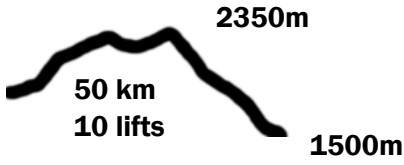
$$$$$ Haus Paradies Hotel, Ftan
+41 818641421 http://www.paradieshotel.ch/

$$$ Hotel Engiadina, Scuol
+41 818641421 http://www.hotel-engiadina.ch

$$$ Guardaval, Scuol
+41 818610909 http://www.guardaval-scuol.ch

$ Scuol Youth Hostel, Scuol
+41 818623131 http://www.youthhostel.ch/en/

Sedrun



Language	Romansh
Season	Nov-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 37
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

disentis-sedrun.graubuenden.ch

Sedrun is called Muster in Romansh, the local language. It is in the municipality of Tujetsch where one of the two souces of the Rhine is located. It shares the Gotthard Oberalp lift pass with Andermatt in canton Uri, although the ski area is on the other side of the Oberalppass and is nearer to Disentis, with which it currently has a greater affinity.

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★

Good for:
- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Families

There are some great slopes with good verticals, varied off-piste and good beginners areas (in the village itself). The main lifts for the larger ski area are just outside the village at Dieni, two stops towards Andermatt on the train.

The expansion of Andermatt includes the construction of three new lifts joining the runs at Sedrun with those in the Nätschen ski area in Andermatt but currently the only way to get between the two resorts is by the Matterhorn Gotthard Bahn rail service.

The Matterhorn Gotthard Bahn is a narrow gauge railway that runs from Disentis, a few kilometres up the Rhine valley

from Sedrun, through Sedrun and Andermatt and on to Brig and Zermatt, taking in some of the most spectacular ski resorts in the world.

Sedrun is particularly popular with families, although I wouldn't rate it highly as a family resort except that it is generally inexpensive.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

With changes in Chur and Disentis, the journey time is three hours by train from Zurich. The best stop for the slopes is Dieni. You can also make the trip via Goschenen and Andermatt.

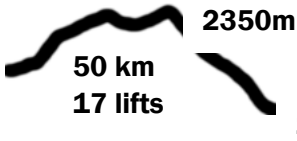
By Road

Zurich is around two and a half hours away by car.

Accommodation

$$ Sporthotel La Cruna, Sedrun
+41 819204040 http://hotelcruna.ch

Sörenberg



Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 50
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.soerenberg.ch

The views from the top of the Brienzer Rothorn cable car over the Jungfrau and the long black run back down to the car park (and bus stop) are the highlights of this resort. In a separate, larger area there are plenty of pleasant, mostly flattish blue runs down the valley.

The resort is only about an hour by train and bus, or car, south of Luzern, and it is one of the closer resorts for much of North Switzerland, but it doesn't seem to get too busy.

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Beginners
- ✔ Day trips

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

Take the train to Schüpfheim then the bus to Sörenberg. From Luzern it is just over an hour, from Zurich about two hours and Basel two and a half hours.

The closest bus stop for the main ski area is Sörenberg Post, virtually opposite the gondola valley station. There is also a bus running between Sörenberg Post and the Brienzer Rothorn cable car.

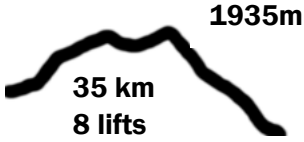
By Road

By car Sörenberg takes about ninety minutes from Basel and Zurich, and roughly an hour from Lucerne.

Accommodation

$$ Schwand Skihütte & Alphotel, Schwand
+41 414881139 http://www.schwand.ch

Stoos



Language	Swiss German
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 50
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

https://stoos-muotatal.ch/

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★
Nordic	★
Walking	★★
Families	★★★
Apres-ski	★

Good for:
- ✔Strong intermediates
- ✔Families
- ✔Car-free
- ✔Scenery & Setting

Stoos is a lovely, uncrowded car-free

Stoos is a lovely resort situated under the Mythens and above the village of Morschach at the head of a high valley.

A cable car connects from Morschach just above Brunnen and a funky new funicular railway, reputedly the world's steepest, runs from just outside Schwyz. From the funicular the slopes are a five minute combination of a glide and walk away, but the cable car is quite close to the bottom chair on the Fronalpstock runs.

In effect the runs at Stoos are divided up between those of the two peaks of the Fronalpstock and Klingenstock. From the top of the Fronalpstock you can look down across Lake Lucerne to Rütli meadow, where by convention it is held that the Swiss Confederation was founded in 1291. Beyond Rütli, you can see Rigi and Pilatus and many other peaks of Central

Switzerland. There are two runs down from Fronalpstock, both pleasant reds, and alongside them are a toboggan run, an airboard run and a fair amount of off-piste.

To get between Fronalpstock and Klingenstock in either direction you need to get a bit of speed up, which can be a little perilous as you cross over people doing the manoeuvre in the opposite direction as well as sundry tobogganists, pedestrians and winter walkers. To get up Klingenstock you also need to take a surface lift before you can get to the chairlift, but the reward is a bowl comprising fiendishly steep reds, a clutch of black runs and acres of off-piste. Needless to say, despite a learners' area and some very limited blue runs in the village, Stoos is not a good resort for nervous intermediates.

Best of the Slopes

The Klingenstock has the tougher runs and more off-piste, but the ridiculously scenic red piste 2, "Panoramique", off Fronalpstock is my favourite, despite a very short section where you will probably need to walk unless you get a lot of speed up.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Zurich.

By Public Transport

The best destination to access the downhill slopes by public transport is the Schwyz, Schlattli Stoosbahnen bus stop, adjacent to mountain railway.

From Zurich it is about one hour fifteen minutes, from Basel and Bern about two hours and twenty minutes and from Lucerne just over an hour.

By Road

The bottom car parks are about an hour from Lucerne, an hour and a quarter from Zurich and a couple of hours from Basel and Bern.

Accommodation

$$ Seminar- und Wellnesshotel Stoos
+41 418174444 http://www.hotel-stoos.ch/

Verbier

Language	French
Season	Nov-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 66
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.verbier.ch/

Ski/board	★★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★★★
Families	★★★★
Apres-ski	★★★★★

Good for:

- ✔ Intermediates
- ✔ Advanced/Experts
- ✔ Snowboarders
- ✔ Extreme terrain
- ✔ Families

Brash, a bit nouveau, perhaps over-rated... whatever, you can't dismiss Verbier if you really want to hit some of the best slopes in the world. The 4 Vallées, Switzerland's answer to the big ski circuses of France is a post-war invention, but the resort is nonetheless surprisingly attractive and the skiing and snowboarding is BIG. The off-piste and marked trails are demanding, but there is something here for everyone, although it is an expensive choice, especially for beginners or early intermediates who won't make the most of what the slopes have to offer.

On the whole Nendaz is better for families, Veysonnaz for intermediates, Thyon for beginners - but Verbier is the destination of choice for party animals and adrenalin junkies.

Verbier is relatively easy to get to, with good public transport links and a relatively short transfer time from Geneva. There are several lift passes available, the key

decision to take if you are staying in Verbier is whether to get the Verbier pass (which excludes Mt Fort) or the whole 4 Vallées/Mont Fort pass. Verbier contrasts with much of the rest of the 4 Vallées in that the equipment is more modern, there are no surface lifts and the runs connect better. If you take the full pass, be aware that the circuit does not connect up as efficiently as it does around Verbier, and it can take you some time to get back.

Best of the Slopes

Much is made of the really very tough off-piste off the back of Mont-Fort and off Mont-Gele, but there are some good marked trails to try out too and they can often provide good off-piste conditions when there is fresh snow.

The challenging wall down to Tortin from Chassoure is a must for strong intermediates to test themselves and the Vallon d'Arby trail to La Tzoumaz and the surrounding off-piste is exceptional. There are also some excellent runs for less adventurous intermediates too, such as the piste from Les Attelas down to Verbier.

The runs down from Les Ruinettes and on Savroleyres include some nice blues.

Where to Eat and Party

For lunch try out the celebrity-owned La Vache (+41 277 713291), at the top of the Attelas chairlift, for reasonably priced pizzas and burgers. I love the goulash soup in Cabane Mont-Fort, above La Chaux (+41 277 781384).

If you want to splash out, there is an excellent Michelin One Star restaurant in the village itself, Chalet d'Adrien (+41 27 771 62 00) and also Chez Dany (+41 27 771 73 48) is highly regarded. Book well in advance.

A nice delicatessen with healthy food is the Lacucina, located just off the main roundabout at Place Central.

The liveliest place to start apres-ski is Bar 1936 below the Mayentzet chairlift, or Fer à Cheval in Verbier itself. Pub Mont Fort is definitely the place to people-watch and party while Farinet (down from the Medran gondola) got voted by the Daily Telegraph as one of the ten hottest apres spots in the world.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Geneva, although nearby Sion also has some international flights.

By Public Transport

The train from Martigny to Le Châble gets you to the valley stationfor the gondola up to Verbier (and also the small resort at Bruson opposite).

From Geneva Airport, the total journey time to the heart of Verbier is only two and a half hours, the same time as from Bern. From Basel or Zurich it takes almost an hour more.

By Road

Geneva and Bern are about two hours away by car, Zurich and Basel are nearer three.

Accommodation

$$$$$ Chalet D'Adrien, Verbier
+41 277716200 http://www.chalet-adrien.com/

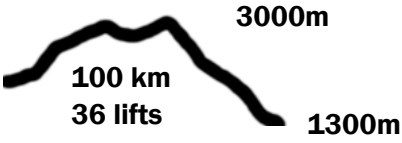
$$$$$ W, Verbier
+41 274728888 http://www.wverbier.com/

$$$$$ La Cordée des Alpes, Verbier
+41 277754545 http://www.hotelcordee.com

$$$ Hotel Bristol, Verbier
+41 277716577 http://www.bristol-verbier.ch/

$ Dzardys Bar & Backpacker, Le Chable
+41 275652531 http://dzardys-bar.ch/

Villars-Gryon



Language	French
Season	Dec-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 54
Snow'n'Rail	Y

www.villars-diablerets.ch

Villars and the nearby village of Gryon combine to make a pleasant enough resort, albeit a bit of a sprawl. Being one of the closest Swiss resorts to Geneva Airport it makes the resort a package holiday favourite - for good reason too, as there is enough terrain to keep all levels of ability happy.

Although it boasts a summit of 3000 metres, this refers to the glacier above Les Diablerets at Glacier3000 which is not linked and the highest point is actually 2020 metres at Croix des Chaux.

Ski/board	★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★★★
Families	★★★★★
Apres-ski	★★★

Good for:

- ✔ **Intermediates**
- ✔ **Beginners**
- ✔ **Snowboarders**
- ✔ **Families**
- ✔ **Short Airport Transfer**
- ✔ **Spa**

To get to Glacier3000 you can ski across to Les Diablerets and then take a bus. However not all passes cover Glacier3000 so check before you set out!

Villars boasts a wide range of activities for the non-skier, including a recently opened spa. Several courtesy bus routes service the area.

Best of the Slopes

There is some reasonable off-piste in Villars, mostly under or near the runs of the chairlifts. It is worth booking a guide to access the best of the off-piste.

Where to Eat and Party

Lac Des Chavonnes (+41 244 952131) at the bottom of the Petit Chamossaire chairlift is renowned for its cuisine. Le Mazot (+41 244921023), on the Les Diablerets side of the

resort has lovely views to enjoy while you have your lunch break. In the evening the Cookie Bar & Restaurant on Rte de Solalex in Gryon (+41 24 498 22 33) and La Gourmandine in Villars (+41 244951743) are recommended. Both for lunch and dinner places can get busy and you may want to book if you want table service. Apres-ski starts at Charlie's bar.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airport is Geneva. Sion is a little closer and also has some international flights.

By Public Transport

From the town of Bex the BVB rack railway takes 40 minutes to ascend up to Villars-sur-Ollon station. There are direct trains from Geneva Airport to Bex, with a transit time of just over an hour and a half.

There is also a bus from Aigle to Villars, which takes 40 minutes and runs every hour.

By Road

Geneva is about an hour and a half away by road. Parking is mainly chargeable.

Accommodation

$$$$$ Chalet RoyAlp Hôtel & Spa, Villars
+41 244959090 http://www.royalp.ch

$ Chalet Martin, Gryon
+41 797246374 http://www.swissbackpackers.ch

Zermatt

Language	Swiss German
Season	All Year
Adult Day Pass	CHF 79
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.zermatt.ch/

Ski/board	★★★★★
Snowpark	★★★★★
Nordic	★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★★★
Apres-ski	★★★★★

Good for:

- ✔Intermediates
- ✔Advanced/Expert
- ✔Snow sure
- ✔Families
- ✔Foodies
- ✔Scenery & Setting

There are lots of little things to complain about in Zermatt, and if there weren't, it would be perfect - the car-free village, the fabulous views of the Matterhorn, the extensive slopes that stretch across into Italy, the amazing mountain restaurants and a guarantee that there will always be something skiable, weather permitting, throughout the year.

The village is right at the head of a valley, surrounded by the highest peaks in Switzerland, and was a quiet farming community until the onset of Alpinism. Now it is a bustling town and the car-free cachet is somewhat undermined by the electric taxis and buses racing to ferry skiers and snowboarders around the resort and its four pisted areas.

The main ski areas are the Rothorn, the Gornergrat and the pistes below the Matterhorn (including Schwarzee) that

connect up to Cervinia in Italy. The ski areas are loosely linked together with the Gornergrat accessed by a slow but scenic cog railway adjacent to the main railway station, and the Rothorn and Matterhorn areas by lifts respectively in the extreme North and South of the resort.

Although it sounds difficult to get about it is not, those plentiful taxis, frequent buses and the option of Shank's pony make it easier than it might sound. From the centre of town a good way to start the day is to take the Gornergrat railway (which starts very early) and hack across to the Rothorn or Stockhorn areas via Gant, or ski down to Furi to get up the Matterhorn.

I've probably been to Zermatt more than any other resort, simply because it still has extensive open terrain long after many resorts have closed. However as Spring blooms, the snow area recedes until only the glacier is open for summer skiing.

The downsides to Zermatt? Expensive, not a good resort for beginners, a few flat sections on the Matterhorn side and it can be brutally cold in January and February.

Best of the Slopes

Some seriously long runs here, particularly the 17k run off the almost 4000m summit of Klein Matterhorn via Trockener Steg and Furgg back into the village, often open long after most resorts have closed for the season.

Also recommended are the Triftji bumps on Stockhorn, although they are often not open until late February.

Stockhorn and Rothorn have 10k runs back into Zermatt.

Where to Eat and Party

Zermatt has some of the best mountain restaurants in the world and dozens of excellent places to eat in the village itself. The small serving of fish soup in Chalet Etoile (+39 0166 940 220) off Plain Maison in Cervinia is not only an inexpensive and filling repast, it is probably the best fish soup you will experience anywhere in the world, at least above 2000m.

Expensive but justly renowned are Chez Vrony (+41 27 967 25 52) below Sunnegga in Findeln, Zum See (+41 27 967 2045) below Furi (turn left at the signpost on to the path above Blatten), and the Fluhalp (+41 27 967 25 97) on the Rothorn.

For apres-ski, many people congregate at the Hennu Stall below Furi before the schuss into Zermatt, whilst in the town itself a good itinerary for a night out might take you to Papperla, the North Wall Bar and Hotel Poste.

For upmarket dining in town the Omnia hotel restaurant (+41 27 966 71 71) and Snowboat, The Zermatt Yacht Club (+41 27 967 43 33) are recommended and at the other end of the scale Sparky's on Schluhmattstrasse is worth a

diversion for good value, good quality food and a relaxed atmosphere. Zermatt also has a good range of Asian and fast food joints.

Getting There

By Air

Zermatt is pretty much equally distant from Geneva, Basel and Zurich airports.

By Public Transport

From Geneva, Zurich and Basel airports the train time to Zermatt is three to four hours, with a change at Visp. Zermatt station is opposite the base station for the Gornegrat railway and a short walk from the funicular up to Sunnegga.

By Road

From Geneva the road time is about three hours, from Basel or Zurich about four.

Zermatt is a car-free resort. If you drive you will need to pay to park at Tasch then buy a return train ticket to go the rest of the way up the valley to Zermatt.

Accommodation

$$$$$ Mont Cervin Palace
+41 279668888 http://www.seilerhotels.ch

$$$$$ Riffelalp Resort
+41 279660555 http://www.riffelalp.com

$$$$ Alex
+41 279667070 http://www.hotelalexzermatt.com

$$$$ Alpenhof
+41 279665555 http://www.alpenhofhotel.com

$$$$ Mirabeau Alpine Residence
+41 279662660 http://www.hotel-mirabeau.ch

$$$ Bella Vista
+41 279662810 http://www.bellavista-zermatt.ch

$$$ Coeur des Alpes
+41 279664080 http://www.coeurdesalpes.ch/

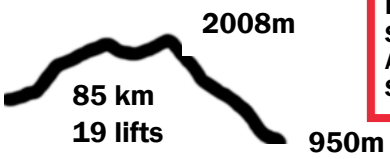
$$$ Cervo
+41 279681212 http://www.cervo.ch

$$ Ambassador
+41 279662611 http://www.ambassadorzermatt.com

$ Hotel Bahnhof
+41 279672406 http://www.hotelbahnhof.com

$ Zermatt Youth Hostel
+41 279672320 http://www.youthhostel.ch/en/

Zweisimmen



Language	Swiss German
Season	Nov-Apr
Adult Day Pass	CHF 63
Snow'n'Rail	Yes

http://www.gstaad.ch

Zweisimmen is a rather quiet village in the beautiful Saanenland valley, but it is incredibly convenient for accessing the largest and best terrain in the Gstaad Mountain Rides. Zweisimmen station has direct trains from Bern that arrive in around 75 minutes whilst the adjacent Rinderberg gondola quickly gets you to the highest station on the mountain. It really couldn't be easier.

Ski/board	★★★
Snowpark	★★
Nordic	★★★
Walking	★★★
Families	★★
Apres-ski	★

Good for:
- ✔Intermediates
- ✔Beginners
- ✔Snowboarders
- ✔Scenery & Setting

Usefully the ski pass for Gstaad Mountain Rides also gives you inclusive use of the trains as far as Rossinière, with stops at Saanenmöser, Schönried, Gstaad itself, Saanen, Rougemont and Château-d'Oex, and also use of the local buses as far as Glacier 3000 including a seasonal ski bus.

Although the slopes are not particularly high, they are generally north-facing and seem to hold up well. There are also a good range of other winter sports activities in the immediate area, including a 7km toboggan run and an indoor

swimming pool. Further afield in the area there is ice-skating, around 11 classic and skating cross-country circuits, 34 identified winter walks, 5 toboggan runs, one airboard piste and 14 snowshoe trails (4 of which are clearly marked).

Best of the Slopes

The run off Parwengesattel towards Lengebrand is a lovely scenic run, great for carving. There's usually good off-piste if there has been recent fresh snow on the other side of the Parwengesattel.

The run off the Rinderberg is fabulous first thing in the morning - the gondola opens at 8.30, half an hour before all the other lifts - and whilst busy during the day, it is floodlit some evenings for night-skiing.

You can pretty much get around the whole of the pistes from St Stephan to Schönried without needing to resort to surface lifts or hitting flat spots, making this an excellent choice for snowboarders.

Getting There

By Air

The nearest major airports are Basel and Zurich.

By Public Transport

Zweisimmen Station is adjacent to the Gondola valley station (left out of station). Bern is about one and a quarter hours away, and Zurich and Basel about an extra hour.

By Road

Bern is about an hour's drive away, Basel is about two and Zurich a little more.

Accommodation

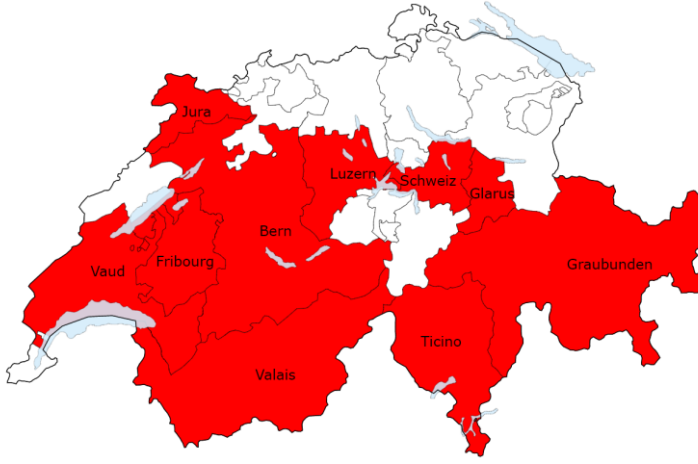
$$$ Hotel Hornberg, Saanenmöser
+41 337486688 http://www.hotel-hornberg.ch

$$$ Hotel Kernen, Schönried
+41 337484020 http://www.bruno-kernen.ch

$$$ Hamilton Lodge and Spa, Rinderberg
+41 279232043 http://www.hamiltonlodge.ch

Best of the Rest

If you happen to be in the area and the snow is good, there are a number of lesser resorts which are worth considering, as mentioned earlier. They are usually easier to reach by car, even though they will have public transport links, and invariably they provide free parking. As well as cheaper lift passes, they usually have at least one restaurant, a ski school and winter hiking paths. They may also have an ice rink, cross-country skiing, snowshoe trails, toboggan runs and a freestyle funpark. I have summarised the best of the rest below by canton but full details are available at swisswintersports.com.



Bern

Kandersteg is a famous old winter sports resort. The skiing is limited but it has a lot of charm and a host of winter sports activities.

Diemtigtal is a beautiful valley of the Simmental with several small resorts worth a visit.

I have picked out Gstaad itself and Zweisimmen as two of the resorts of the Simmental, but there are a number of

other rail-served villages with good access to the main pistes of Gstaad Mountain Rides, including Saanenmöser, Saanen and Schönried. St. Stephan also has access to the periphery of the region via a creaky old chairlift.

Fribourg

I have included Moléson in this book as it is probably the more challenging of the mamy small resorts in the French-speaking canton of Fribourg, but there are a number of other excellent small resorts in the Fribourg Region, including La Berra and Les Paccots (which also has a good snowshoe trail). Charmey has a reasonable range of downhill, a good snowshoe trail and a very good spa. Jaun boasts a 6km toboggan run and a good snowshoe trail.

Glarus

A number of mostly low-lying resorts north of the Alps are popular with locals. Elm is a good alternative to Braunwald.

Graubünden

There are a wealth of attractive small resorts in Graubünden I have omitted - Grüsch-Danusa, the spa village of Vals, Splügen, Bivio, and Tschiertschen.

Bergün is a mecca for tobogganists who come to the resort from all over Europe and use the Rhaetian Railway to ascend to the top of the run down to the village.

Jura

In the region rather than the canton, there are several small resorts such as Ste-Croix, St-Cergue and Bugnenets-Savagnières which make up for locals in convenience what they lack in altitude. The Jura also possesses many cross-country circuits, particularly noteworthy being the ones at Vallée de Joux and Freiberge (at Saignelégier).

Luzern

There are a number of small resorts around Lucerne popular with locals, such as Marbach and, across in Obwalden, Giswil and Lungern.

Schwyz

Dotted around Schwyz are the slopes collectively known as the Mythen Region, the Mythens being the distinctive mountain peaks in the area. Resorts includes Brunni-Haggenegg, Holzegg, Handgruobi-Rotenfluh and Ibergeregg. There is also the Swiss Knife Valley group of resorts which include Stoos (listed here in detail), Sattel, Einsiedeln, Rothenthurm, Rigi Scheidegg and the Rigi. The Mythen Region resorts are mostly served by surface lifts and poor public transport by Swiss standards, but they offer free parking, well-groomed slopes, affordable passes and stunning views.

Ticino

Cari and Nara are two small resorts, not as large as Airolo but with enough skiing for a day out.

Valais

In the Valais I have missed some gems of resorts. Anzère, Belalp, Champex-Lac, Ovrannaz, and Grächen are well worth visiting, although are no better than other similar resorts I have included and have inferior public transport connections. Around Visp there are some charming small resorts including Törbel, Bürchen and Unterbäch that are covered by the Swiss Railway Snow'n'Rail scheme.

If spas are as important as your skiing during a vacation, Leukerbad is a perfect choice. It has both a good family-oriented public spa and a more exclusive spa for those who like a little pampering.

When the snow is good Les Marécottes, on the train out of Martigny towards Chamonix, has some fabulous lift-served

off-piste. There is a courtesy bus if you want to avoid the walk to the pistes.

Although I have singled out Nendaz and Verbier of the resorts of the 4 Vallées, there are a number of others worth considering. Thyon and Veysonnaz are good bases for the Western section of the circuit. Siviez is right in the heart of the circuit. La Tzoumaz boasts a 10km toboggan run, the longest in French-speaking Switzerland, and is close to the excellent intermediate pistes at Savoleyres.

For cross-country Goms compares with the Engadin for the range of trails available, connecting twelve villages (most of which also have railway stations) between Oberwald and Niederwald.

Francophone Switzerland has introduced the MagicPass recently which provides unlimited skiing in 25 resorts, mostly in Valais and Vaud, for a modest fee if you purchase it early enough.

Vaud

Above the Swiss Riviera there are some small resorts at Les Avants (where Hemingway reputedly learnt to ski), Les Pléiades and Les Rochers de Naye which are popular with families and learners. You can easily access these resorts from Lausanne, Vevey or Montreux. Incidentally Montreux has a very good Christmas market.

Within the Pays-d'Enhaut and covered by the Gstaad Mountain Rides ski pass there are two French-speaking resorts, Château-d'Oex and Rougemont. Château-d'Oex is small, but I've enjoyed skiing there very much – in late January it hosts a huge hot air balloon festival. Rougemont gives access to one of the larger sections of the Gstaad circuit, stretching as far as Saanen and Gstaad itself.

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For more information visit
http://SwissWinterSports.com

Pictures above: Ischgl and Les Marécottes.